

NEW
From
ALL ABOUT
HISTORY

Mary Queen of Scots

From marriage to
murder, uncover the
truth of Scotland's
tragic queen

DEADLY
RIVALRY

How a queenly feud
ended in Mary's
execution



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ROUGH WOOING • KIRK O'FIELDS • MARY VS ELIZABETH I



Welcome to *Mary Queen of Scots*

There are few historical figures whose stories are destined to play out on the silver screen centuries later, but Mary, Queen of Scots' life needs no embellishment. A saga of love, lies, betrayal and brutality, Mary Stuart's life was cut short at the age of 44 at the executioner's block. But what happened in Mary's formative years to lead to this tragic fate?

Over the following pages, discover the early life of Scotland's infant queen regnant, from Henry VIII's Rough Wooing of the Scots to her eventual marriage to the heir of the French throne. Find out why widowhood was Mary's undoing, and meet the men who schemed and conspired to win the queen's crown for themselves. Elsewhere, explore the turbulent relationship between Mary and her Tudor cousin, Queen Elizabeth I and uncover the plots that led to Mary's eventual demise.



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Mary Queen of Scots

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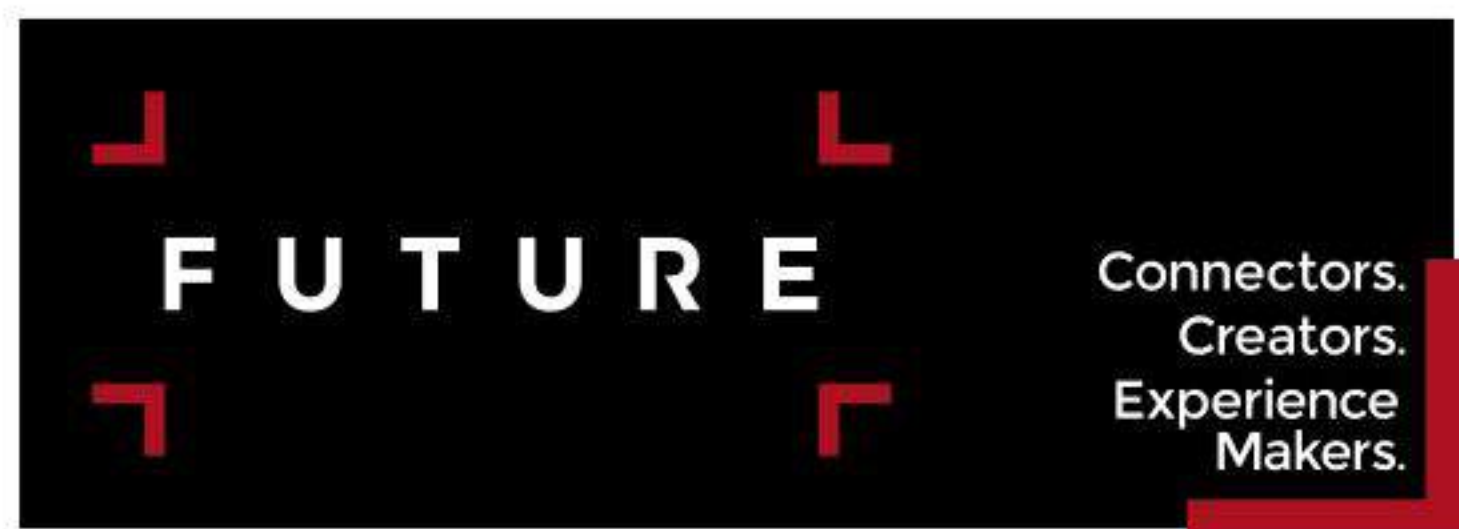
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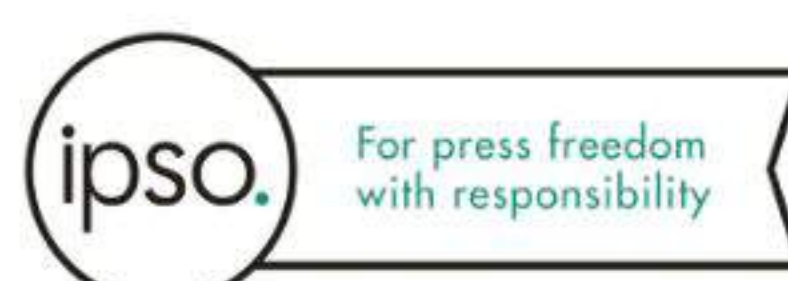
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Birth of a dynasty

From retainers to sovereigns, the Stuart family ruled Scotland for centuries before they gained a greater prize — the throne of England

Words by Peter Price



Mary, Queen of Scots divides up her jewels among her servants the day before her execution



he royal house of Stuart is one of the most enduring and conflicting in British history. They propelled Scotland, a country on the outskirts of western life and politics, onto the European centre

stage, where a dramatic turn of events saw them take the throne of England after the Tudor dynasty faded away.

A common and sometimes confusing trait with the Stuarts, and many other royal families, is the repetition in their naming conventions. James and Mary are the most popular names, with monarchs often only differentiated by their place in the reigning order.

Hailing from 11th-century Brittany, the Norman ancestors of the Stuart line came to Britain under King Henry I of England. Alan fitz Flaad served as a knight under the king and gained castles, wealth and power. His son, Walter Fitzalan, was invited to Scotland under David I to serve as his High Steward. The name of Stuart, sometimes spelt Stewart to denote the Scottish line of the family, would be derived from this job title, with the name meaning 'hall ward' in old English, possibly dated from before the 7th century.

Being a member of an Anglo-Norman household, Walter would have brought his expertise in European warfare to the Scottish court, including motte and bailey castles and the heavily armoured

shock cavalry that the Normans favoured. This new military clout enabled Walter and his family to exert royal control over the more rebellious northeast and southeast regions of the country. This position soon became hereditary and Walter's great-grandson would take their title as the family name. Thus the Stuarts were born.

Over the next few centuries the family grew in power and wealth, but their fortunes would improve further in 1315 when the 6th High Steward, Walter, became part of the Scottish royal family when he married Marjorie Bruce, daughter of Robert the Bruce. The house would claim the throne when David II died childless, and Walter and Marjorie's son Robert would become Robert II of Scotland.

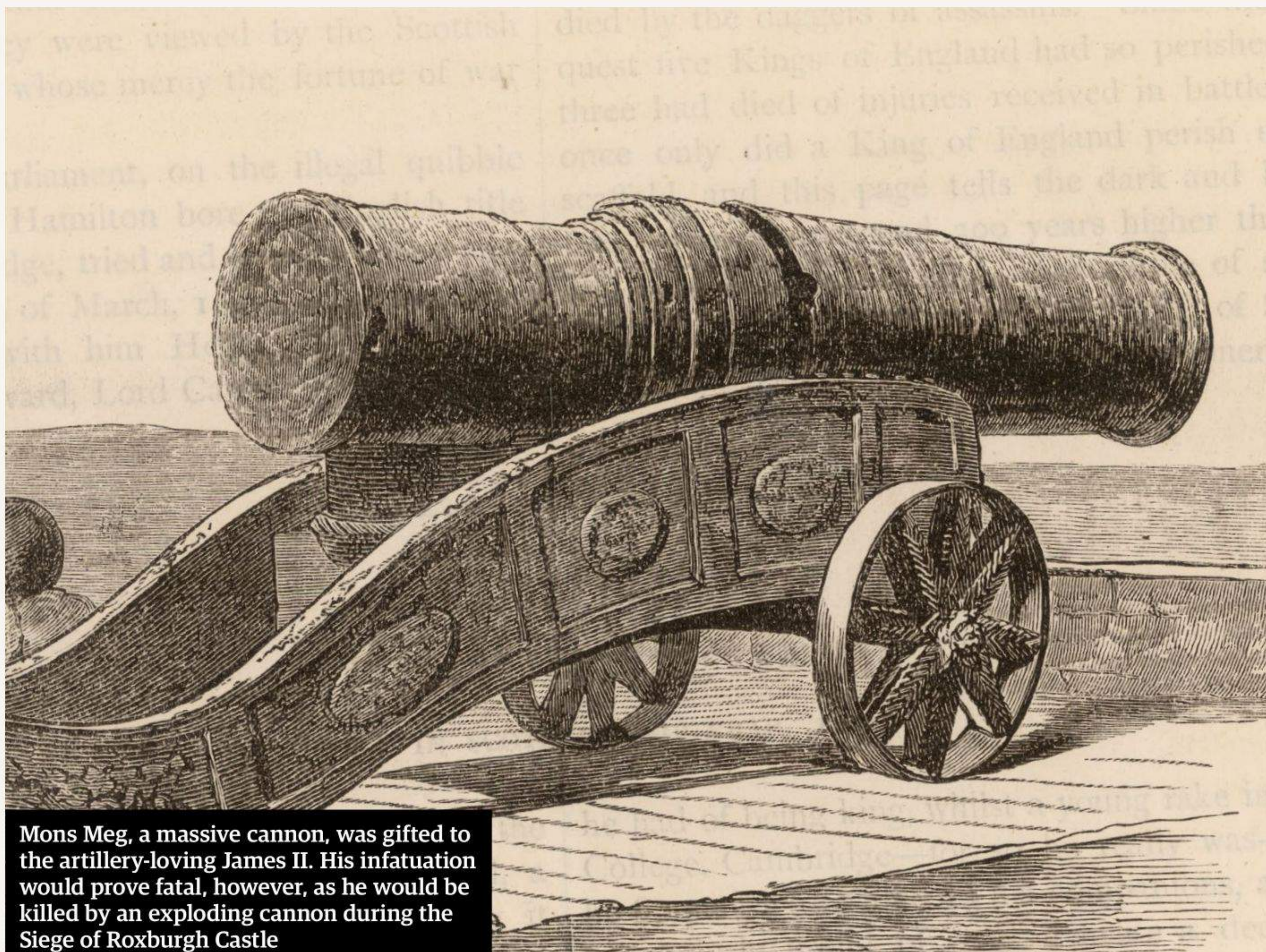
Threats to the crown for the early Stuart monarchs would largely come from within with a near constant struggle with rebellious nobles being the norm. The first James of the Stuart line would lose his life in this way.

Having been sent away for his own safety, the infant James was captured by the English and held captive for much of his early life. Returning to Scotland and exacting his revenge on the nobles who refused to pay his ransom, James purged the court of corrupt nobles, but a

conspiracy was mounting against him. Robert II, James' grandfather, had many children, and some questioned the legitimacy of the line James was descended from. On a winter's night in February 1437, the conspirators attacked James in his lodgings at Perth. In a desperate bid to escape, James attempted to pry the floorboards loose and escape down into the sewers. In a cruel twist of fate, the king had once ordered the sewer entrance blocked off to stop his tennis balls from getting lost. Cornered and with no way out, James was brutally stabbed to death, with one conspirator crying, "I have thus slayne and delivered yow of so crewel a tyrant, the grettest enemye that Scottes or Scotland might have."

James I's son, James II, would also spend much of his reign battling with the Scottish nobility and would see the rise of some of the Stewarts most bitter enemies, the Black Douglasses. With James II crowned when he was only an infant, there was a scramble by the most powerful families in Scotland over who should control and guide the young king. Alexander Livingston and William Crichton appeared as the two prominent men to act as James' guardians and regents, but their power was threatened by the young and strong-willed 6th Earl of the Clan Douglas, William. To remove

"In a desperate bid to escape, James attempted to pry the floorboards loose and escape down into the sewers"



Mons Meg, a massive cannon, was gifted to the artillery-loving James II. His infatuation would prove fatal, however, as he would be killed by an exploding cannon during the Siege of Roxburgh Castle

this threat they looked to have Douglas tried for treason against the crown. While they had gathered the evidence they needed, Douglas was a powerful earl with strong fortifications and many warriors – marching into his home and apprehending him simply wasn't possible.

On the 24 November 1440 Douglas was invited to Edinburgh Castle at the king's request. The story goes that the young James became fast friends with the charismatic earl during the feast as a black bull's head was carried into the hall. According to Scottish tradition, a bull's head foretold the imminent death of the guest, and despite young James' pleading, Douglas and his men were decapitated in front of the young monarch. While an exciting story, historians agree that Douglas was likely arrested as soon as he arrived in the castle, tried for treason and then executed on Castle Hill.

Apart from the feud with the Douglasses, James II was a popular king and had a special love for gunpowder and cannons. The Duke of Burgundy gifted James a colossal cannon named Mons Meg, which fired cannon balls weighing a massive 180 kilograms. The gun was only used on ceremonial

The unicorn and the lion

The rivalry between Scotland and England has been centuries in the making

Almost since the countries' inception, Scotland and England have been rivals. Nowadays this feud is mostly played out on rugby or football pitches, but its roots reach back for millennia. The intense warfare and tensions started when Edward I invaded Scotland in 1296, claiming overlordship over all the British Isles. From then on Edward's successors would look to exert his claim over the country. It wasn't until James VI united the crowns that any meaningful peace would exist between the countries.

The rivalry would also, by some coincidence, spill over into England and Scotland's national animals. The lion had been used as a heraldic symbol in England since Henry I and was used officially since Richard the Lionheart's reign. The unicorn, Scotland's national animal, came from Celtic mythology as a symbol of purity and innocence but also displays power and masculinity. Its inclusion in chivalric tales and its association with Jesus Christ could explain why it was chosen as Scotland's national animal.

Lions and unicorns are considered enemies in mythology, so it was somehow fitting that they were chosen, although it does not seem to have been deliberate. Once James VI & I took the throne he used both animals, representing the sun and moon, to show the new found unity between the two old enemies.



The Royal Coat of Arms for the United Kingdom has the lion and unicorn, the symbols for England and Scotland, standing side by side – a symbol of unity

occasions and was last fired successfully to mark the wedding of James' great-great-granddaughter, Mary, Queen of Scots.

James' love of artillery would see his life go up in smoke. While besieging Roxburgh Castle, one of the last English strongholds left over in Scotland since the Wars of Independence, a cannon he was standing next to exploded and killed him. His son James, the third of his name, would take the throne after this unfortunate death.

Anglo-Scottish relations, having been strained for years, took a marked upward shift in James III's reign, especially after Henry VII took the English throne in 1485, ushering in the House of Tudor. A new dynasty meant new diplomatic relations and

marriages were discussed, although James III's proposals took precedence over his son's (the future James IV) and so did not secure a lasting alliance as hoped. The inheritance of James III was made equally as uncertain by his clear favouritism of his younger son over his heir. Made the Earl of Ross, James, as the second son was also called, was a slap in the face to the heir, who was only made the Duke of Rothesay, but James III did not stop there. With the dream of a united Scotland fixed in his mind, he made moves to bring the nobility into line, but his heavy-handed approach saw this utterly fail and would ultimately cost him his life.

The estrangement of his son the Duke of Rothesay would see the prince become a rallying



point for all the disenfranchised nobles from around Scotland. Gathering an army around himself, the future James IV marched to meet his father in the field at Sauchieburn. James III, carrying Robert the Bruce's sword, could not invoke his ancestor's warrior spirit and was soundly defeated and killed in the battle. The story goes that James III, finding himself cut off from his army, took shelter in a mill and was consoled by a priest. After gaining an audience with the priest, the host revealed himself to be an assassin and his knife caught James in the throat, a most undignified end.

Mystery still surrounds how involved James IV was in his father's death. Sources seem to

indicate that he was probably with the rebels at Sauchieburn, but being implicated in regicide and patricide would hardly be an auspicious beginning to his reign.

James IV was the first king to rule over all of what we now consider to be Scotland. His campaigns in the north had united the country, and for the first time nobles from every corner of the land were sat in his council. Having paired new ship building and gunpowder technology together, he created mobile gun platforms that had finally subdued the Lords of the Isles, who had been a thorn in the Stuarts' side for generations.

He patronised the arts, licensing royal printing presses that turned out many works including the

Scotichronicon, a grand history of Scotland that stressed its independence. As he had shown in his clash with the Lord of the Isles, James had a talent for naval warfare. As well as supporting his uncle King Hans of Denmark against a revolt in Sweden and Norway, he commissioned the largest warship in Europe at the time, The Great Michael. The ship was offered to the pope for use against the Ottomans and was twice the size of the Mary Rose in England. But her upkeep was too great for a country like Scotland and the ship was eventually sold to the French and may have taken part in the Battle of the Solent against the Mary Rose.

Unknowingly for him, the wedding of the dashing, brave and charismatic James would see his progenies sit on the throne of England 100 years after he said 'I do'. His bride-to-be was the 13-year-old daughter of Henry VII, Margaret Tudor. Henry VII is said to have told his courtiers that a Scottish king would one day sit on the English throne, but England would still hold more power, stating, "The accession will be of Scotland to England, not of England to Scotland." The thistle and the rose were joined, although James would not live to see the seeds of this relationship bear fruit as he was forced to turn his attention to the border and Henry VIII's encroaching influence.

The English king looked to emulate his hero, the great warrior King Henry V, over his more peace-loving father. James and Henry VII had signed the first permanent peace between England and Scotland for more than 200 years, the Treaty of Perpetual Peace. But with Henry VIII's army storming over to France, James' hands were tied, as the Auld Alliance, a centuries-old military pact between Scotland and France, overruled the more recent deal. England had now joined the Holy League and now, along with Spain, the Netherlands, The Holy Roman Empire and the Papal states, looked to check the power of the frighteningly strong French king, Louis XII.

This obviously left Scotland in a sticky situation. They had a centuries-old obligation to uphold their treaty with France, but in doing so they would jeopardise the newly found peace with England. Siding with the French not only meant war with England but also saw James excommunicated. The Papacy was at war with France and since Scotland was not on its side, they were not considered to be

"As he had shown in his clash with the Lord of the Isles, James had a talent for naval warfare"

The Battle of Flodden saw James IV become the last king on the British Isles to die in battle



Mary, Queen of Scots

"James' death at Flodden marked him as the last British monarch to die on the field of battle"

on God's side. James' march on England was not the first time he had tried to destabilise England. In 1496 he had lent support to the Yorkist pretender to the throne, Perkin Warbeck.

However, this aid only amounted to a few border raids, and James did not seem to have had much enthusiasm for the charlatan pretender. This time, however, James was serious and marched 40,000 men over the border, the largest Scottish army ever to enter England. As well as being a symbol of power, the army was made up of nobility from every corner of the country. James had united Scotland like no other king before him, a truly national army.

The English army that met the Scots on Flodden Field was led by Catherine of Aragon, as Henry VIII was still campaigning in France. The Scots employed a new weapon from the continent, a 25-foot pike, which, when used en masse, presented a fearsome weapon. Unfortunately for James, the terrain and conditions during the battle made it difficult to use the pike correctly, and the English billhook, a weapon that combined the advantages of a spear and axe, won the day. James and much of the Scottish nobility lost their lives at Flodden, a crushing blow for the Scots.

James' death at Flodden marked him as the last British monarch to die on the field of battle. His body, filled with arrows and slashed by billhooks, was embalmed and sent to Catherine of Aragon as a trophy. She in turn sent his bloody and tattered surcoat to her husband in France, urging him to use the ragged garment as a war banner. James'



Robert II, the first monarch of the Stuart line, was Robert the Bruce's grandson



The Black Douglasses

The Clan Douglas went from national heroes to national zeroes

The medieval history of Clan Douglas is one of ever-shifting fortunes – turning from swashbuckling heroes to the bitter enemies of the crown. During the Scottish Wars of Independence they became folk heroes of sorts. Sir James Douglas, the first 'Black Douglas', fought alongside Robert the Bruce and became a boogeyman figure to the English. And during the Second War of Scottish Independence, William Douglas, known as the 'Flower of Chivalry', proved the clan's worth again by capturing the heavily defended Edinburgh Castle from the English in 1341.

Using a tactic reminiscent of the Trojan Horse, Douglas and his men dressed as merchants, gained access to the castle and flung the gates open to allow the bloodthirsty citizens of Edinburgh to pour in. The defenders were slaughtered, many being hurled off the rock the castle stood on.

With the English threat gone the Douglasses, now a very powerful clan, turned their ambitions towards the Scottish throne. They had married into the royal family by Robert III's daughter matched with Archibald Douglas and

the clan was involved in military struggles on the border and on the continent. This power was seen by the Stewart kings as a destabilising force in the country, and they looked to stamp the clan down, a show of force to keep the rest of the nobility in line.

The first bloody actions were carried out by James II, or at least in his name. The 16-year-old William Douglas, the 6th Earl, was killed in what would come to be known as the apocryphal Black Dinner. As the king was only ten years old during this time, it is hard to see a child ordering the cold-blooded execution of one of the most powerful men in the country. But years later a similar episode would play out when a 23-year-old James would stab the 8th Earl, another William, after he had been accused of treason and plotting with the English. This act would lead to the 9th Earl, James Douglas, rebelling against the throne and having to be brought to heel at the Battle of Arkinholm 1552.

Here, James, styled the 'Black Douglas' in the tradition of the family, fought against the Royal forces led by the 'Red Douglas', George, whose

family ties to James saw him fight the majority of his family. This battle would spell an end to the Black Douglasses and see the rise of the red, who were loyal to the crown. A family that began as heroes turned enemies of the crown, brought low by their ambitions and the military might of the Stewarts.



James Douglas carries Robert the Bruce's heart on crusade. The Clan Douglas had served the crown faithfully until they became too powerful to control

body was not able to receive a royal burial as the king was still excommunicated and his body and head, which had become detached and used as a football, are now lost forever. A rather ignoble end to Scotland's last great warrior king. The crown was inherited by James' son, who became James V.

His daughter, Mary Queen of Scots, is one of the most famous and tragic of the Stuart monarchs. Imprisoned for much of her life, the events surrounding her reign and shocking execution styles itself into an early modern soap opera of epic proportions and paved the way for her son to ascend to the English throne. She was just six days old when her father, James V, passed away, leaving the country open to the 'rough wooing' of Henry VIII, who was determined to have her marry his son Edward and join the crowns of Scotland and England. Both Henry and Henri II of France knew that whoever controlled the infant Mary would hold sway over Scotland and its political and religious future. She had come to the throne at a time when animosity between Protestants and Catholics in Scotland was at an all-time high.

The country was still Catholic when Mary became queen, and she was clever enough to not deal heavy-handedly with the Protestant minority. However, a series of controversies during her reign spurred nobles to rebel against her, instead placing her one-year-old son, James, on the throne. Mary

fled to England in the hope of convincing her cousin, the Protestant monarch Elizabeth I, to aid her in retaking the country. Trouble had followed Mary, however, and she became a suspect in the mysterious death of her husband Lord Danley.

Imprisoned for nearly 20 years, Mary would spend her last days in England, and her downfall would be unknowingly instigated by the pope. 'Regnans in Excelsis' was a papal bull exempting English Catholics from the country's taxes and laws. It also declared that the Protestant Queen Elizabeth I was not the rightful heir to the throne. This act fermented many plots and rebellions throughout the country and Mary, a possible Catholic claimant to the throne, was at the centre of this web of intrigue.

Her end came with the Babington Plot, which looked to kill Elizabeth and replace her with Mary, someone who would be sympathetic to the Catholic's cause. Babington corresponded with Mary with coded letters in which the imprisoned queen gave orders to have Elizabeth killed. Unknown to Mary, Elizabeth's spy network had intercepted these communications and the damning evidence was used during her trial to seek the death penalty. In what would become somewhat of a Stuart tradition, Mary I of Scotland was decapitated on 8 February 1587. However, the Stuarts were not done yet, as Mary's son was set



James I with his wife Joan Beaufort. James would be killed by rebellious nobles after a bungled escape attempt foiled by his love of tennis

to unite the crowns and raise the family to even loftier power. Elizabeth I had not named an heir, and James VI had a strong claim to the English throne. Each of his parents were descended from the Tudor king Henry VII through Margaret Tudor, and unlike his mother, he was a Protestant. Already a king, the closest living relative and with relations between Scotland and England better than they had been for years, James looked like the perfect candidate to ensure a smooth and bloodless

Keeping it in the family

The joining of the houses Stuart and Tudor paved the way for the union of the crowns

The royal houses of Scotland and England had always enjoyed royal ties, with princes and princesses married for prosperity and peace. The arrival of the Tudor dynasty saw Anglo-Scottish relations turn over a new leaf. The signing of the Treaty of Perpetual Peace saw an end to hostilities and the marriage of Margaret Tudor to James IV.

The families had been indirectly linked before, but James and Margaret's union was the first direct marriage after the Tudors had gained the throne. While the Scottish royal family was secure in its inheritance, the Tudor household was coming under pressure. Henry VIII's only son, Edward VI, died young and named Lady Jane Grey as heir,

excluding his half sisters, Mary and Elizabeth. After the king's death Mary took the throne from Lady Jane Grey, but on her death the throne passed to her sister Elizabeth. Like her sister, Elizabeth had no legitimate heir, leading Robert Cecil to make James VI, the closest blood relative to the late queen, James I of England and Ireland.

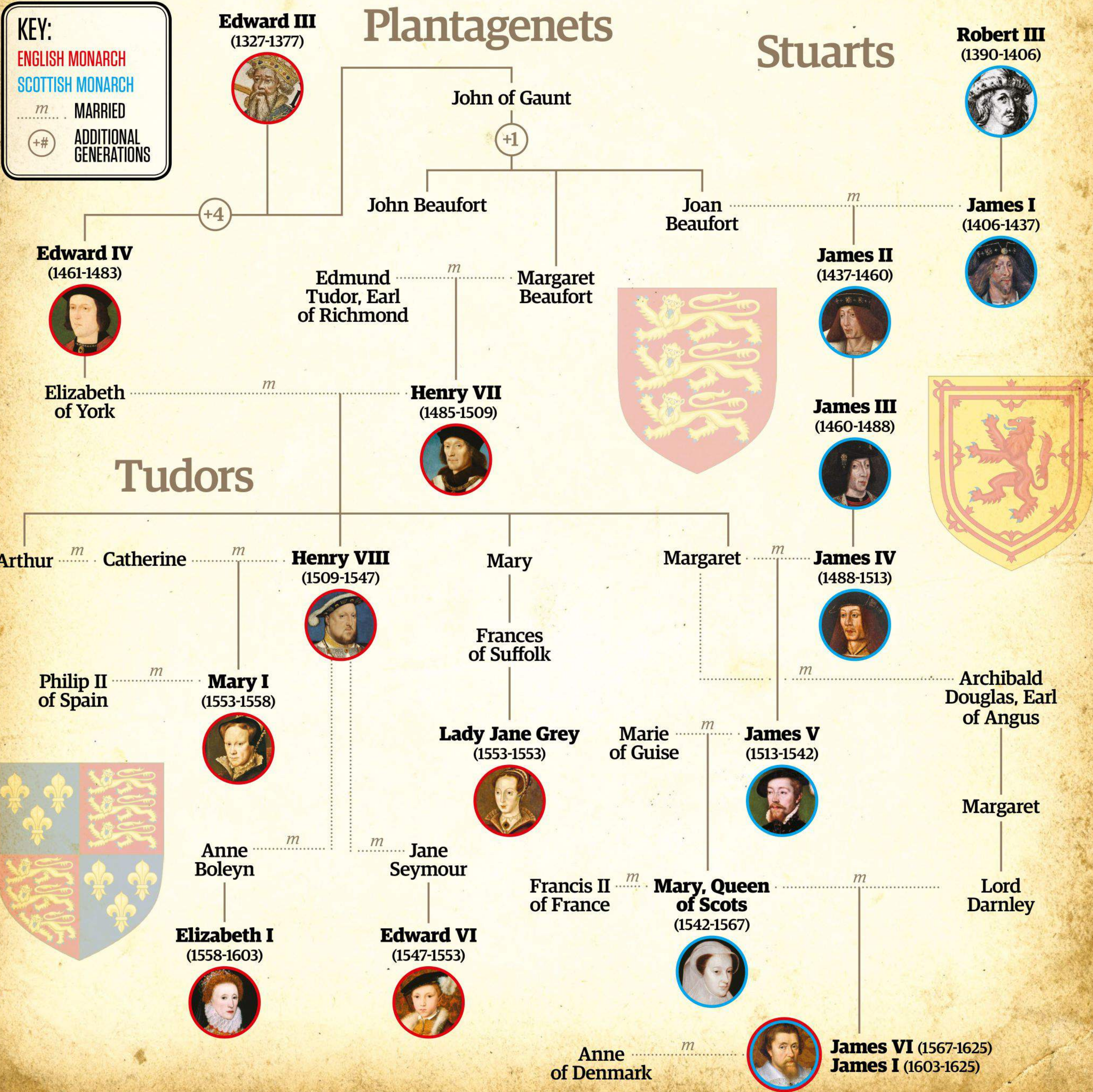
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ENGLISH MONARCH

SCOTTISH MONARCH

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+# ADDITIONAL GENERATIONS



The execution of
Mary, Queen of Scots



transfer of power. An atmosphere of fear and uncertainty surrounded the last years of Elizabeth's reign, as even James was doubtful of his position to wear the English and Scottish crowns.

The ease with which James took the throne was probably a surprise to many of the nobles, both English and Scottish, and to James himself. Henry VIII had stipulated in his will that James was not able to ascend to the throne, but this was countered by James' claim that he ruled through the divine right of kings. Succeeding by hereditary right and primogeniture, he argued that Henry VIII had no power to deny these holy and historic rights.

The secret correspondence between James and Elizabeth's principal minister, Robert Cecil, showed that the Scottish king had the support of at least some of the privy councillors in England. The possibly treasonous correspondence between James VI and Cecil began months before the queen's death. With her reluctance to name an

heir, Cecil took it upon himself to set up James' ascension to power.

Shortly before Elizabeth's death a draft proclamation was sent to James to ensure readiness. Within hours of the queen's demise in 1603 James was declared king of Scotland, England and Ireland and the two crowns were united.

As Henry VII had predicted, England soon became the focus of James' attentions. Promising to return to Scotland every three years, he would only visit once in his 14-year reign as joint monarch. This may have been out of necessity, as his vision for the two countries to unite was met with fierce opposition in the House of Commons. By 1607

James had managed to get many of the hostile laws against Scotland repealed and had styled himself King of Great Britain.

While these acts helped to bridge the gap between the two countries, a political union was still out of the question. James, frustrated by this, described the English Parliament as "barren by preconceived opinions".

This new beginning for the Stuarts would herald a new age but one still fraught with danger. The fresh start would be marred by rivalry, religious differences and anti-monarchy sentiment. It was a new chapter for the royal house, but one no less thrilling and dangerous.

"In what would become somewhat of a Stuart tradition, Mary I of Scotland was decapitated on 8 February 1587"

Reckoning at Flodden

James IV's hubris doomed a nation to decades of turmoil
as the shockwaves passed down the increasingly entwined
generations of the houses of Tudor and Stuart

Words by James Hoare



A messenger-knight in armour
delivering the news of the
Battle of Flodden the day after
the defeat of the Scots in 1513



For 200 bloody years Scotland's fortunes had been pulled tight in a murderous embrace with its aggressive Southern neighbour. The ascent of Henry Tudor in the aftermath of the Battle

of Bosworth saw the status quo shaken. The new king had internal foes and little time for land grabs. While he played the tyrant at home, in matters of foreign policy Henry VII was a peacemaker, marrying his heir, Arthur, into the powerful Spanish royal family and signing the Treaty of Perpetual Peace with James IV of Scotland. Sealed with the marriage of the Scottish king to Henry VII's daughter, Margaret Tudor, the 1502 Treaty of Perpetual Peace acknowledged the Kingdom of Scotland as sovereign and ended the on-off warfare between the two.

In 1509 Henry VII died and Henry VIII took English foreign policy in a radically different direction, burning the bridges his father had carefully laid across Europe's fault lines. In 1511 England joined the Holy League of Spain, Venice, Switzerland and the Holy Roman Empire in its war to contain the new French king.

Scotland had been joined to France since 1295 by the Auld Alliance, and James IV - caught between two treaties - pleaded with his English brother-in-law to reconsider. The Auld Alliance was Scotland's nuclear deterrent. It maintained that if either country was attacked, the other would launch an invasion of England but in real terms was far more demanding of the Scots as France would only be obliged to attack English territories on the continent but not England itself. A popular king who presided over a flowering of culture in Scotland, James IV's legacy could so easily have been different had he kept his cool in face of provocations from the boorish King of England.

In 1512 Henry VIII cast aside the Treaty of Perpetual Peace and referred to James as his vassal, with parliament describing the King of Scots as "the very homager and obediencer of right to your Highness." Henry VIII had effectively rolled back the language of Anglo-Scottish relations to the days of his grandfather and great-grandfather, but it was James IV who marched them there in deed.

In June 1513, Henry VIII invaded northern France with a large army. In response - against the advice of his nobles and his queen - James IV began to beat the drums of war. He sent an envoy to Henry urging him to halt his cross-Channel offensive, but the king refused.

French reinforcements arrived in Scotland bringing arms, money and an experienced

in my lord helbard hath sent me a lre open to your grace w^m son of myn by the whiche ye shal see at length the grette victorie that our lord hath sent your subget in your absence and for this cause it is noo more harm to trouble your grace w^t long writing but to my thinking this barell hath bee to your grace and al your deame the grettest honor that coude bee and more than ye shuld w^m at the crowne of ffraunce thankend bee god of it / and I am fur your grace forgeteth not to doo this whiche shal be cause to sende you many moo suche grette victories as I trust he shal doo / my husband for hastynesse w^t Rojecrosse / coude not sende your grace the pece of the king of scots cote whiche John Glyn nobl bringeth in this your grace shal see how I can kepe my promys sending you for your banners a lre cote / I thought to sende hymself but you but our enghlyshment best wold not suffre it / it shuld have been better for hym to have been in poore peax - than to have this rebarde, al that god sendeth is for the best / my lord of fressay my henry wold fayne knowe your pleasur in the burying of the king of scots body for he hath written to me soo / with the next messenger your grace pleasur may bee herin knowen / and w^t this I make an ende praying god to sende you home shortly for without this noo roye lre can bee accomplishid / and for the same I pray and nobl goo to our lady at walsyngham that I promised soo long ago to be / at wokinge the xvi. day of septembre I sende your grace herin a bille founde in a scottishmans purse of suche thinge as the frenche king sent to the said king of scots to make warre against you bechynng you to sende warthebe heda / my lord of fressay cometh to bringe your humble wif and ffare ffare in your grace

Dated September 1513, Queen Catherine writes to Henry to tell him the result of the Battle of Flodden

Catherine of Aragon

officer cadre, while the Stuart call to arms saw an estimated 40,000 Scots gather to face down the old foe. Assembling in Edinburgh before marching south with the largest Scottish invasion force to ever cross into England, James IV sent advance notice of his intention to invade - part chivalry and part a last-ditch attempt to get the Tudor king to see he wasn't bluffing.

Though Henry continued his French campaign, he had certainly taken the threat of a Scottish offensive seriously. Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey - a capable commander who had fought with Edward IV and Richard III in the Wars of the Roses,

before swearing fealty to the Tudor usurper - was tasked with seeing off the King of Scots.

The French invasion force had been recruited from the south of England, so Surrey mustered the untapped northern shires with the help of the queen, Catherine of Aragon (who had eventually married Henry following the death of his older brother, Arthur). Although the supply train was in disarray from the hasty assembly, Surrey hurried north with 25,000 men.

On 22 August, the Scots crossed the border and quickly took possession of the English fortifications in Northumberland. James IV had possibly been

planning a limited offensive, and hugging the Scottish border hoped to inflict enough damage to draw Henry VIII back to England with minimal risk to his own force. With such rich pickings in the captured strongholds, many Scots had already looted and left, bringing the invasion force down to around 34,000 men – they still outnumbered the English but it was an inauspicious start.

On 5 September, the English army arrived on the east bank of the River Till and Surrey communicated with James IV by messenger. Seeing the Scots occupy the high ground of Branxton Hill, a significant force multiplier with their already superior numbers, Surrey appealed to honour and, agreeing to do battle on 9 September, he attempted to coax the king down to fight “fairly” on level terrain.

Showing the fragility that had led him down the path of war in the first place, the King of Scots snapped in return “that it was not fitting for an earl to seek to command a king.” Rather than approach the Scottish army head-on, Surrey decided to march north along the River Till, crossing on the day of battle and turning south to engage the Scots. It wasn’t a surprise attack; commanding the high ground James IV could see exactly where the English were, but Surrey had cut off the direct line of Scottish retreat and he had placed the boggy ground – made worse by the rain – north of Branxton Hill between the two forces.

The bog could just as easily be to England’s disadvantage, but it would depend on who held their nerve. At 4pm the two armies exchanged cannon fire. Scottish artillery was far superior to the English light cannon, but the Scots weren’t properly positioned and unable to fire downhill, inflicting few losses. The Scots in turn were pummelled by the smaller English pieces and a rain of arrows from English longbowmen.

Impatient with sitting under English arc of fire and losing men by the handful, the Scottish left flank under Lord Home broke and charged down the hillside, punching a hole in Surrey’s right flank and forcing the English to flee. English light cavalry, held back to press an advantage or reinforce retreat, quickly counterattacked and restored the line.

Seeing Home’s initial success, James IV led his retinue on foot and charged from the centre. Either he saw real opportunity – the English had already committed their reserves – or he feared that if Home’s men were overwhelmed and wiped out, chances of victory would begin to diminish.

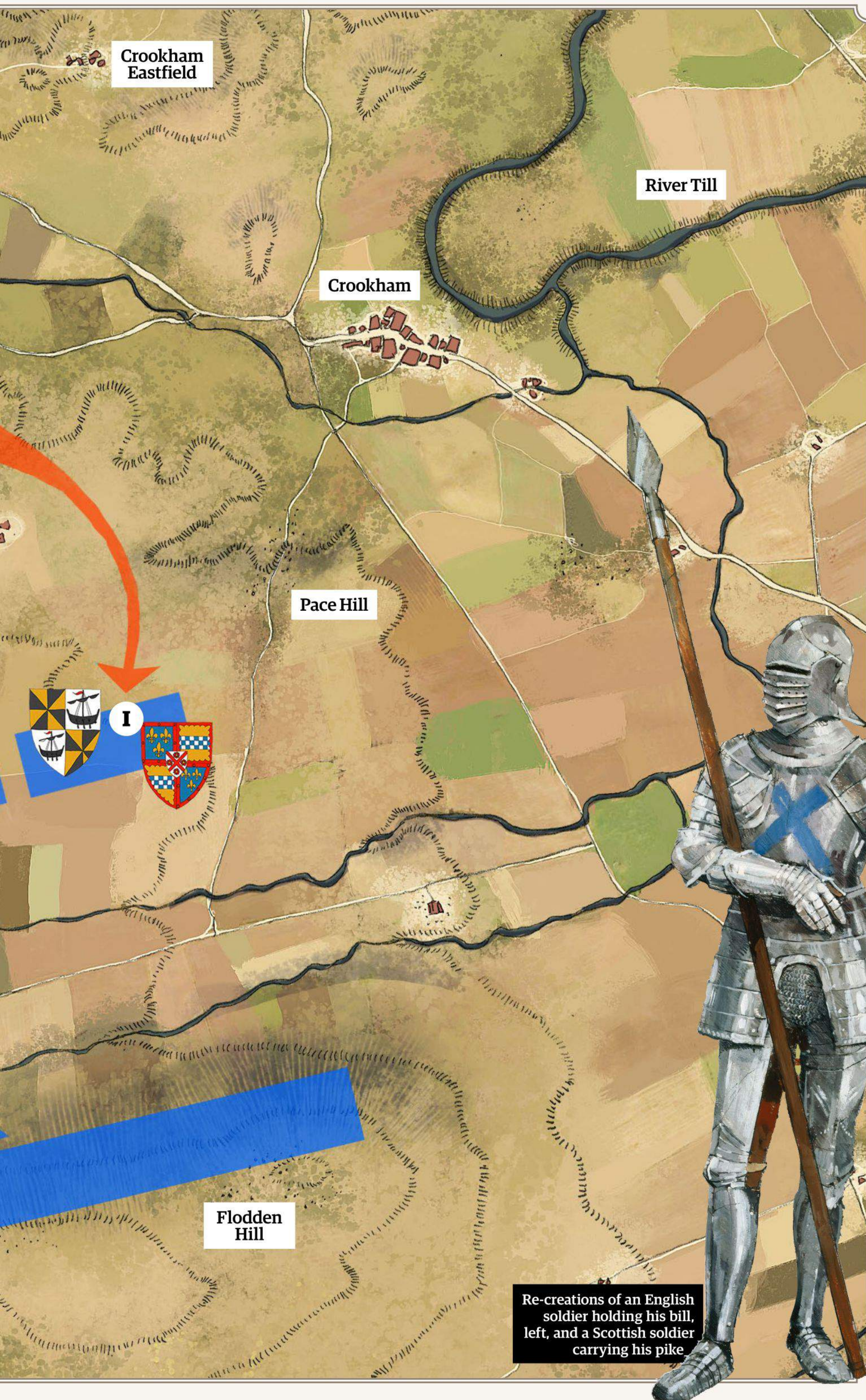
James IV’s elite hammered the English centre, but in engaging the King of Scots had lost the initiative. While he fought from the front like a medieval warlord, he had squandered his high ground – not just his

Battle of Flodden 9 September 1513



Reckoning at Flodden

ENGLAND: **A** Dacre **B** Stanley **C** Edmund Howard **D** Thomas Howard **E** Surrey
SCOTLAND: **F** Home & Huntly **G** Erroll, Crawford & Montrose **H** James IV **I** Argyll & Lennox **J** Bothwell



tactical advantage, but his ability to command the battle. In the tight press of bodies in the low-lying bog, James IV's view extended as far as his blade could reach and his concerns were now focused on his own life and the lives of the men to his left and right. Surrey meanwhile commanded the English from horseback behind the line, and he could see the Scottish charge faltering.

Many Scots, especially those in the front ranks, fought with 18-foot continental pikes supplied by the French. Deadly in the right hands, they could extend the reach of an infantryman significantly but little time had been allowed for training, and in the sodden melee they were easy prey for the English billhooks. These halberd-like weapons had been converted from agricultural use, and were more than capable of smashing aside the long vulnerable pike shafts and once the distance closed the Scots were forced to drop their pikes and draw their swords, handing the English the advantage.

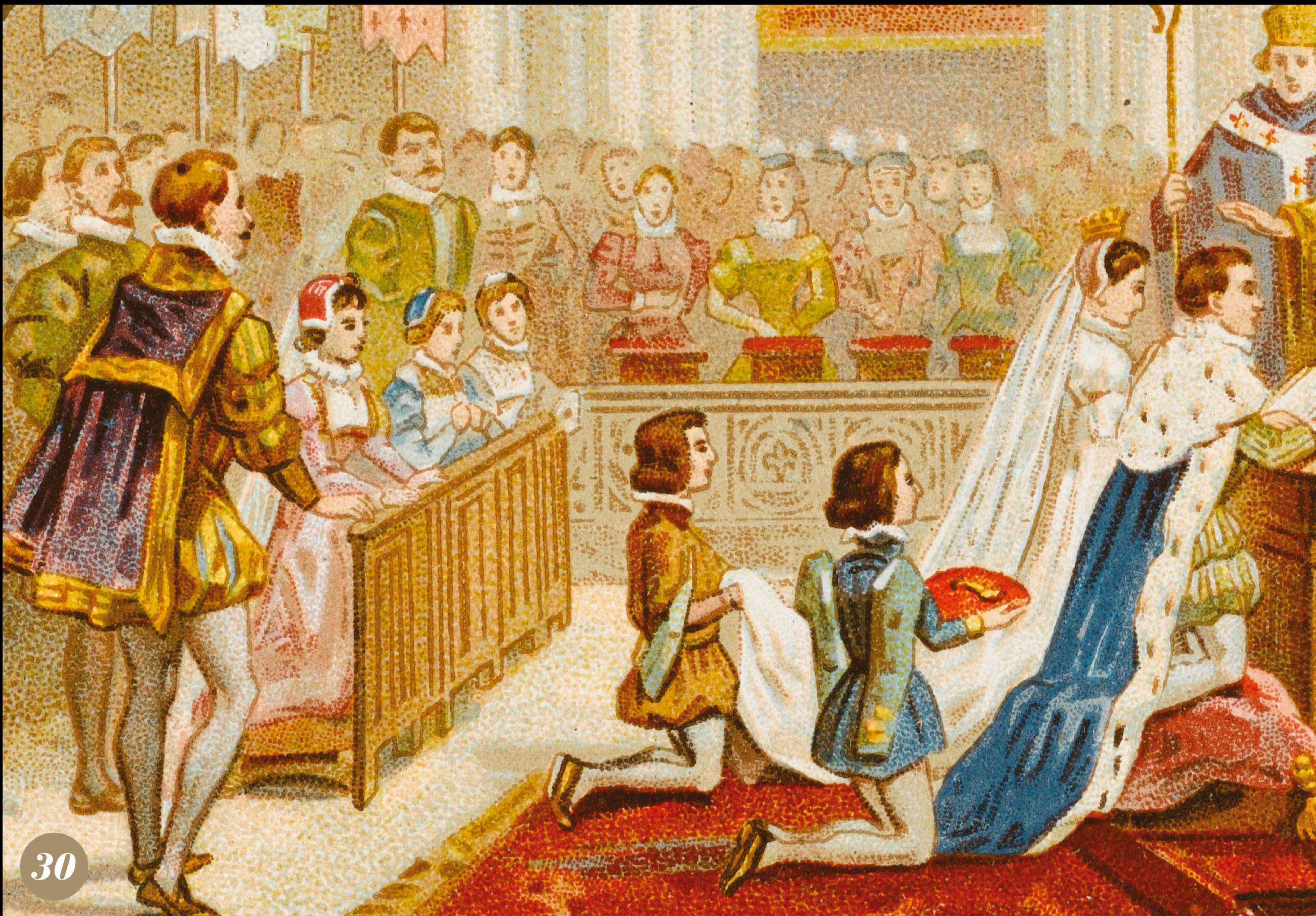
As the tide began to turn in the centre and Lord Home's men began to be pushed back on the Scottish left flank, the Scottish right flank charged to try and outflank the English centre. They were countered by Sir Edward Stanley - his men had arrived late and rained arrows on the unarmoured Scots as they advanced. The Scottish right flank routed, and Stanley began to flank the Scottish centre, firing arrows into the unguarded rear.

The battle was lost and James IV was cut down by Stanley, alongside between 10,000 and 14,000 of his countrymen. An estimated 1,500 Englishmen were slain. Catherine of Aragon sent James IV's bloodied surcoat and iron gauntlets to her husband in France as proof of the victory.

The flower of Scottish nobility was lost and the heir was a 17-month-old infant. Now more dependant on France and more fearful of England than ever, the new James V was eventually married into the French nobility, first to Madeleine of Valois and then to Marie de Guise.

In reward for his service at Flodden the Earl of Surrey became Duke of Norfolk, bringing his kin closer to the crown and two of his grandchildren - Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard - would go on to marry the king. The former would bear Henry VIII a daughter, who in turn would become queen.

Eventually two grandchildren of Flodden, whose lives were only made possible by Scotland's defeat - Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I of England - would decide the future of both kingdoms. One was the descendent of the slain Stuart king and the product of a deepening Franco-Scottish pact, the other a descendent of the commander who defeated him and the daughter of the bellicose Tudor who set England and Scotland at odds.



30

Life in France

22 Rough Wooing

Henry VIII's policy to 'make England great again' foundered in poorly handled war and diplomacy with Scotland and France

30 Mary Stuart's first mistake

The Queen of Scots' long-awaited marriage to Dauphin Francis of France may have been glittering, but beneath the opulence lay a dirty secret

38 The Catholic heir of England

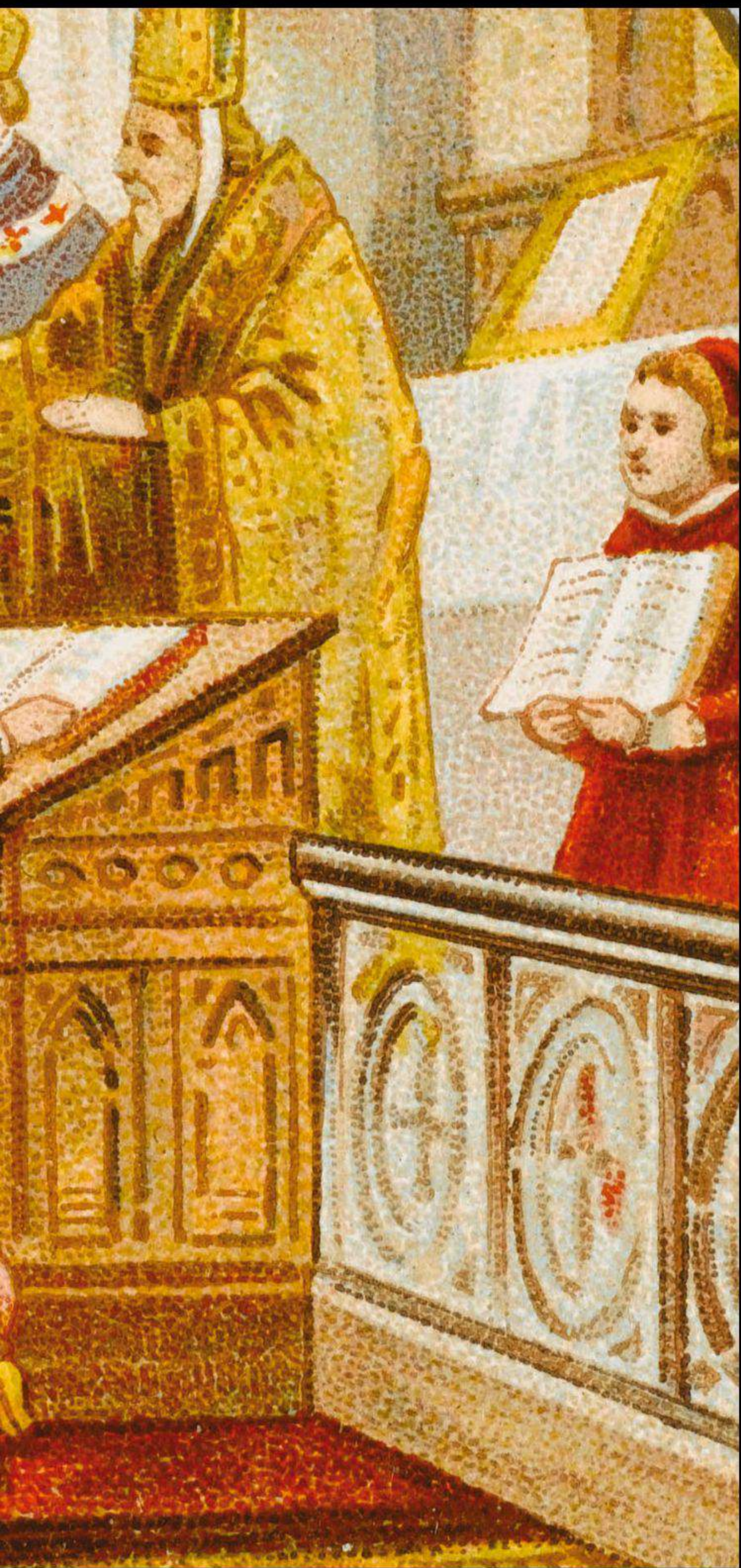
Already queen of Scotland and dauphine of France, many considered that Mary also became queen of England in 1558

44 The weeping widow

Mary was raised to become queen of France, but her future suddenly changed in December 1560

44

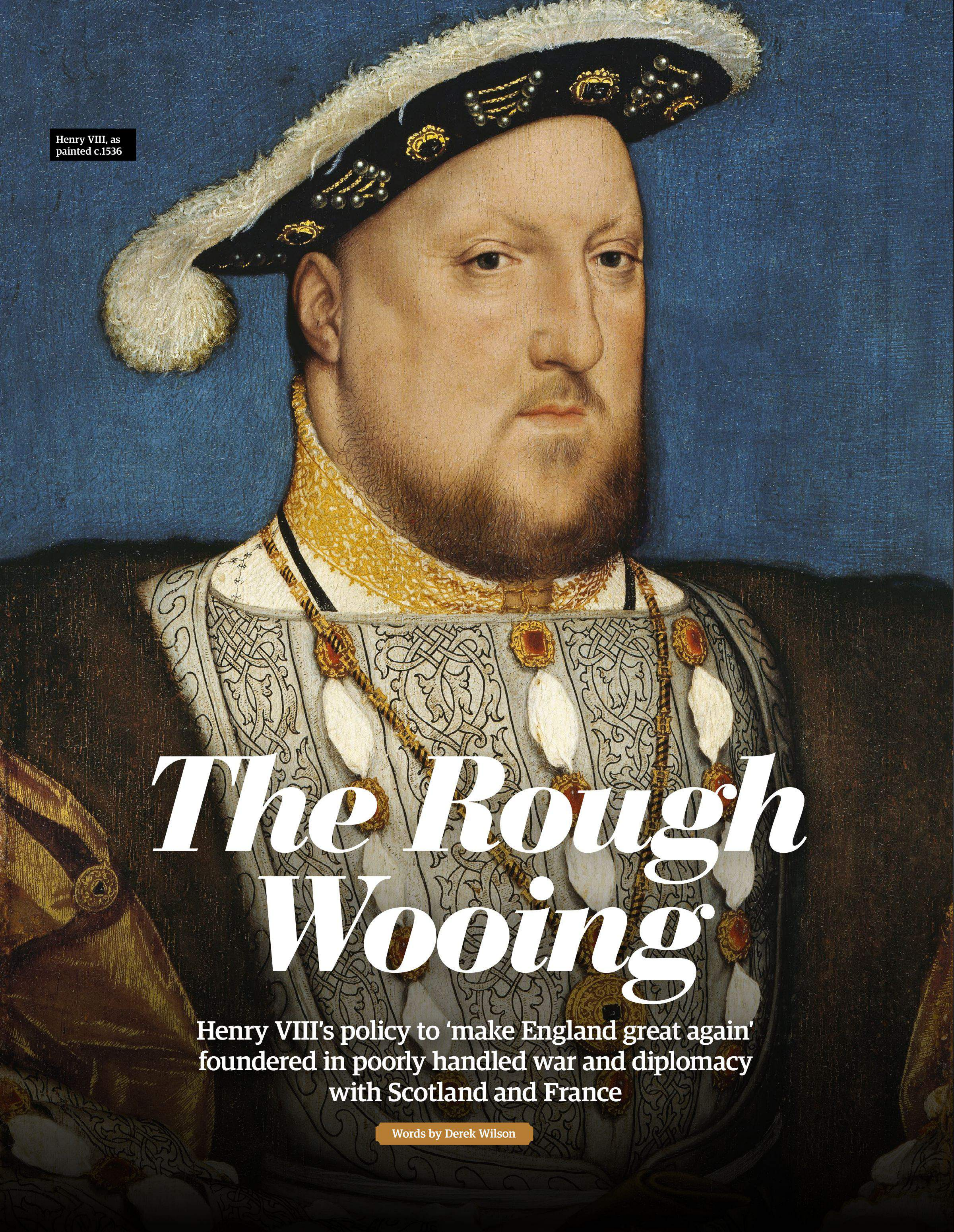




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22

A detailed portrait of Henry VIII, the King of England, wearing a black cap with a large white feather and a black band adorned with gold and jewels. He has a full beard and is wearing an ornate white and gold robe with intricate patterns and large white pendants. The background is a deep blue.

Henry VIII, as
painted c.1536

The Rough Wooring

Henry VIII's policy to 'make England great again'
foundered in poorly handled war and diplomacy
with Scotland and France

Words by Derek Wilson



In Henry VIII's mind the Hundred Years' War was not over. Back in 1474 Edward IV had abandoned his claim to the crown of France in return for substantial cash payments.

Resumed hostilities were unrealistic but romantic nationalists, of whom Henry VIII was certainly one, harked back to an age of imperial splendour and military glory when the English king ruled a substantial part of continental Europe.

Early in his reign Henry had resumed the French war - with disastrous and humiliating results. However, his ambition had never abated and in 1542 conditions seemed favourable to renew his claim. Any councillor, making a careful calculation of the odds, would almost certainly, have advised against an expensive military enterprise. It was a desperate gamble. The government was broke and effective invasion of France would be ruinously expensive (the eventual cost was well over £2,000,000 or well over £1.5 billion in today's currency). To raise the necessary funds the king had to impose taxes, sell off a large amount of the lands confiscated from the church, devalue the coinage and borrow heavily from foreign bankers. Everything depended on the war being successful, in which case Henry's costs would have been recouped several times over. Unfortunately, in his gung-ho lust for a glorious military adventure King Henry overlooked two important factors. The first was the unreliability of his ally, the Emperor Charles V. The plan devised by the monarchs was for a two-pronged invasion in which the English and imperial armies converged on Paris, where Henry would be crowned king. When push came to shove, and Henry had proudly led his army across the Channel, Charles pulled out and made peace with the French king on his own terms.

The second miscalculation was the possible behaviour of Scotland. For centuries the 'Auld Alliance' had been the staple of Scottish-French relations. The Scots had traditionally looked to England's long-term enemy for protection from their neighbouring kingdom and the French had often provoked border warfare in order to deflect the English in time of war. According to

Shakespeare, there was an old axiom: 'If that you will France win, then with Scotland first begin'. Henry, determined to neutralise Scotland, acted in line with this advice. In 1542 relations between the two neighbouring kingdoms, never cordial, were more than usually fraught. King James V was Henry's nephew but when his mother, Margaret Tudor, died in 1541 the kindred link was broken. James now had a French wife, Marie de Guise, and his court bristled with her fellow countrymen. The most influential of James' advisers was Cardinal David Beaton, the papal legate. He was fixedly pro-

French for religious as well as political reasons. Henry was, in his eyes, a heretic because he had broken the ties between the English church and the papacy.

In 1541 Henry made the longest journey of his reign, travelling with a vast entourage all the way to York. He issued an invitation to James to meet him there and lavish preparations were made for their summit meeting. It did not take place. James listened to Beaton's advice and failed to show up. Henry was furious at being snubbed. Months of ill-tempered diplomacy followed. Eventually the



Ratification by Edward VI of the Treaty of Boulogne

"The government was broke and effective invasion of France would be ruinously expensive"

frustrated English king ordered the Duke of Norfolk to lead a full-scale invasion. But what from London looked like a simple military operation involved major logistical problems. It was late October 1542 before Norfolk was ready and when his army did march it accomplished nothing more than the burning of a few lowland villages. This, however, was sufficient for James to retaliate in force. On 24 November an army of 18,000 Scots crossed the border into Cumberland. On marshy ground at Solway Moss they were confronted by Thomas Wharton, Deputy Warden of the West Marches, who had assembled a defensive contingent of no more than 3,000 men.

At Solway Moss the Scots suffered a humiliating defeat of stunning proportions.

They were hampered by divided and uncoordinated leadership and treacherous ground. Wharton watched as the enemy negotiated the River Esk and the adjacent marsh. As evening drew on that November day, he launched a flanking attack. Trapped in the soggy terrain the Scots were in utter confusion and hundreds of them drowned. Their commanders had no course but surrender. Wharton took 1,200 prisoners, including several nobles, as well as 20 cannon and 3,000 horses. More important than this humiliating defeat (if contemporary reports are to be believed) was its impact on the Scottish king. James, who watched the rout (it could scarcely be called a battle) from a distance, was already a sick man. On 14 December he died, overcome, or so it is said, by remorse. He had another reason to be depressed. Only six days earlier his wife had given birth to the only child destined to survive. It was not the longed-for son and heir, but a girl. Such were the tragic circumstances of Mary, Queen of Scots' entry to the world.

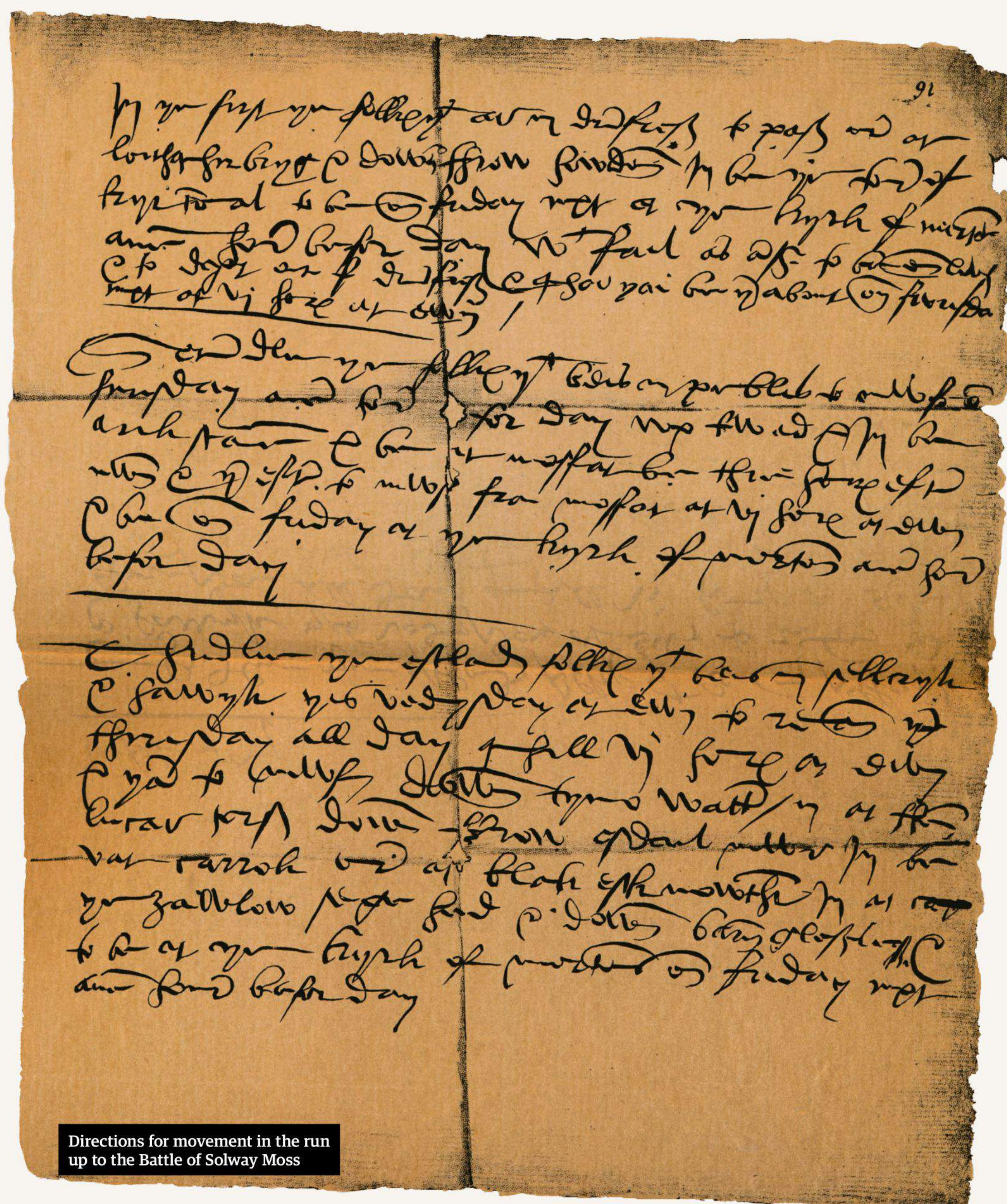
With everything going his way as the time for the planned invasion of France approached, Henry decided to be magnanimous. The more important prisoners celebrated Christmas with the king at Hampton Court and were returned home as soon as the details of their ransoms had been settled. His charm offensive continued with the gracious assurance that he would not press home his advantage against Scotland's infant queen. He required, he said, nothing more than amity between the two kingdoms. To that

end he proposed a marriage between his only son, Edward (then aged five) and the Queen of Scots, when they should be of a suitable age. The following summer the king's wishes were formalised in the Treaty of Greenwich. The goal to which the negotiations pointed was the union of the crowns by the proposed marriage. In preparation for this Mary's planned upbringing was mapped out in detail. She was to be provided with an English tutor and governess and, at the age of ten, would be moved to England until her marriage. At one point Henry even offered to marry Marie de Guise.

If the terms of the treaty, duly ratified by both sides, had been acted out, all Henry's diplomatic

"Mary's planned upbringing was mapped out in detail"

objections would have been realised. France would have been isolated and prevented from 'interfering' in Scottish affairs. Henry could have led his cross-Channel invasion in the summer of 1544, as arranged. As to the future, it is unlikely that he thought that far ahead. The potential harvest of permanent peace would have been for others to reap. However, that possibility was soon of no more than academic interest. Henry's neat



Directions for movement in the run up to the Battle of Solway Moss

Marie de Guise

A dramatic account of the battle was written by John Hooper, chaplain to Protector Somerset in a letter to a friend in Zurich

Marie de Guise (1515-1560) was a member of France's most prominent and active Catholic family. One of her brothers was the Duke of Lorraine, the leading nobleman in north eastern France. Two other brothers were cardinals. She would have preferred the life of a nun but her family had dynastic designs for her. She was married to Louis, Duke of Longueville, in 1534 and by him she had two sons but her husband died after less than three years.

At this point Mary attracted the attention of two widowed kings, James V and Henry VIII. Given Henry's marital history the English option was scarcely an attractive prospect. Yet neither did Mary want to marry James and leave her family for his cold northern kingdom. However, she did her duty. She and James were married in 1538. They had two sons, who died

in infancy, and one daughter, Mary, born six days before King James' death. As the nearest male relative to the late king the Earl of Arran became regent but his vacillating policies lost him the respect of both pro-English and pro-French parties. Mary, on the other hand, displayed quiet courage and the determination to protect her daughter's inheritance.

During the siege of Haddington (1548) she risked her own life by coming in range of the English guns and was lucky to survive when sixteen members of her entourage were killed. Her bid for the regency in 1554 was warmly supported by parliament.

While the politico-religious situation became steadily more complex, the remainder of Mary's life was spent in self-sacrificial service in the interests of her daughter, her Guise family, and France.



Marie de Guise

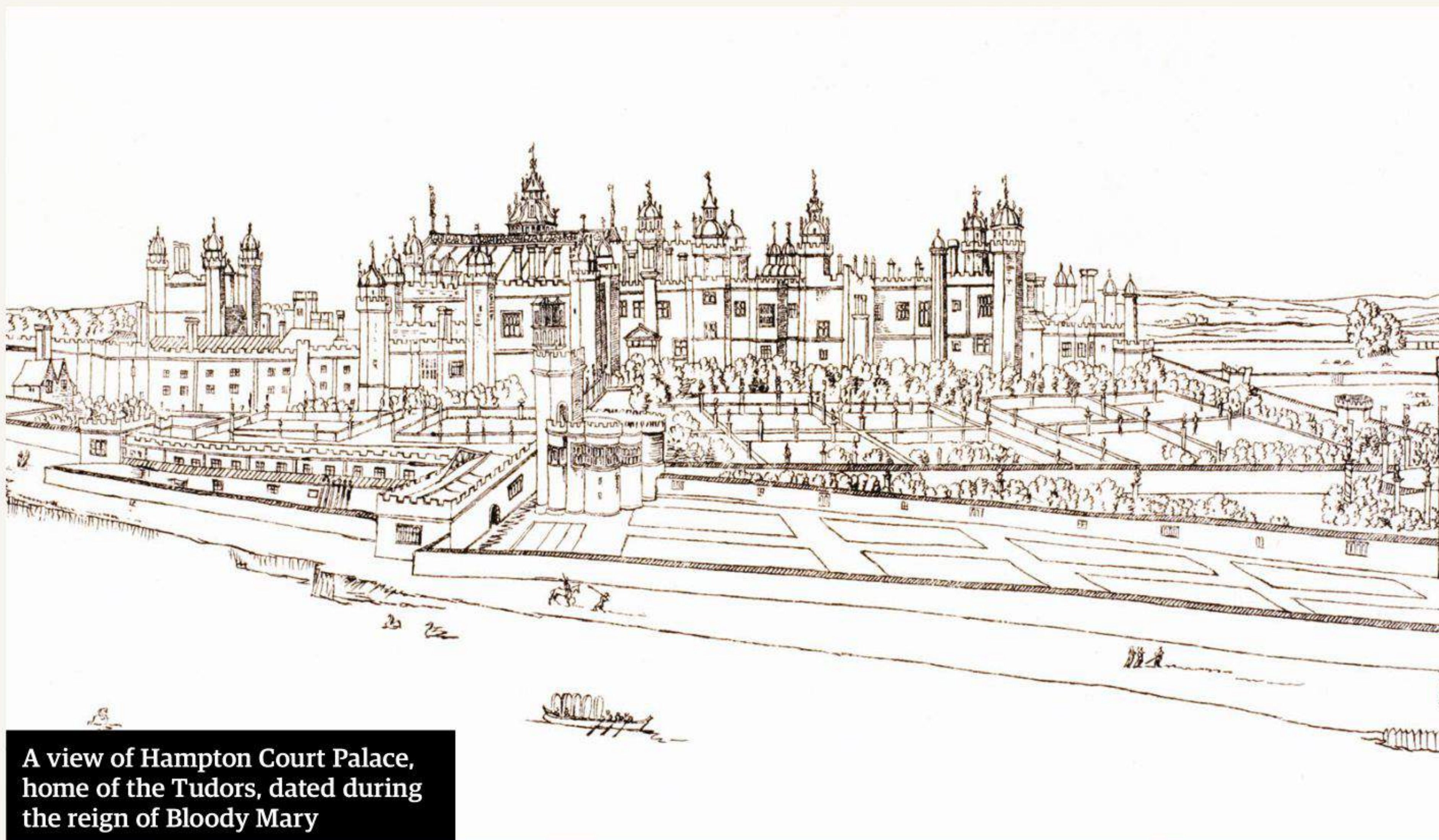
plan was immediately trashed by the Scottish parliament, who threw out the Treaty of Greenwich on 11 December 1543. Not only that; they defiantly renewed their treaty with France.

Henry VIII, now a semi-invalid, racked with pain from his ulcerated legs and even more prone to mood swings than ever before, ordered savage reprisals. The military campaign he now

unleashed was an expression of his anger at the Scots' bad faith but it was also a powerful warning of what they might expect if they gave the French any kind of support during the cross-Channel military venture that was only months away. The conflict he now unleashed was the beginning of what is known in Scottish history as the Eight (or Nine) Years' War. Yet it has another name. In 1556,

Jean de Beaugué, a French soldier who served in Scotland and was an eyewitness of many of the events he recorded, published *The Story of the War of Scotland*. In it he ascribed to one of the Scottish leaders the remark, 'We liked not the manner of the wooing and would not stoop to being bullied into love'. Hence, this protracted and ultimately futile campaign is commonly known as the 'Rough Wooing'.

The king's chosen angel of wrath was Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, his brother-in-law and Prince Edward's uncle. Hertford was an experienced and more than competent soldier. He was also possessed by the demon ambition. He looked to the future and saw his relationship with the ruling family as a stairway to absolute power. Whatever his king ordered, Seymour would accomplish, to the letter. And what did Henry order? With a large army at his back, Seymour was to proclaim that the English king was Mary Stuart's guardian, to denounce Cardinal Beaton as a warmonger and the agent of Francis I of France. If the Scottish government did not come to heel, Seymour was to teach them a lesson they would never forget, namely the devastation of their capital. These instructions were carried out to the letter. By 5 May Seymour was outside Edinburgh with 14,000 men. He demanded the city's unconditional surrender. When this was refused, English artillery blew in Canongate. His men poured through and ravished the city. Houses were looted and burned. The royal palace of Holyrood and the adjacent abbey, extended and beautified over recent decades



A view of Hampton Court Palace, home of the Tudors, dated during the reign of Bloody Mary

"With a large army at his back, Seymour was to proclaim that the English king was Mary Stuart's guardian"



Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, whose alliance with France put an end to Henry VIII's hopes to marry his son to the Scottish queen

"The Anglo-French war of 1544-5 was, from England's point of view a costly fiasco"

by James IV and James V, were burned. Only the castle, high on its mound, was left untouched - and that was because Seymour lacked the resources for a long siege. In fact, he and his army were on their way south again within days. So far from chastening the Scots, this negative demonstration underpinned their defiance and united former rival factions against the English.

The aristocratic leaders on both sides of the border were fully accustomed to hostilities; from cattle raids to regional rivalries, territorial claims, counter-claims and national battles, but the Rough Wooing raised the temperature for four reasons. Firstly, it was one aspect of a major Anglo-French conflict. Secondly, it involved the dynastic aspirations of the two royal houses and the very real prospect of some kind of union. Thirdly, because both nations (after 1546) were ruled by under-aged monarchs, policy was made by noble factions. Fourthly, because the Reformation further complicated the rivalry of participants. England had broken its links with the papacy and, in both countries bitter rivalry was growing between Catholics and followers of Martin Luther, John Calvin and other continental Protestant leaders.

The Anglo-French war of 1544-5 was, from England's point of view, a costly fiasco, but although there were no more major military engagements after 1545, a state of hostility continued between the two nations. Scotland now became, more than ever before, the diplomatic and military battleground between the two nations. After the death of Henry VIII in January 1547, the man who assumed power as Protector of the Realm was Edward Seymour, who now took the title Duke of Somerset. He fully embraced the Reformation and worked with the Calvinist nobles north of the border to establish Protestantism there. He lost no time in pursuing his Scottish policy, the ultimate aim of which was to set his nephew on the throne of a united British kingdom. In September he personally led an amphibious assault on the Lowlands with an army of 17,000 including mercenary units from Germany, Spain and Italy. At Pinkie Cleugh near Musselburgh he encountered a large force led by his opposite number in Scotland, James Hamilton, Earl of Arran. The battle took place on 10 September, a date ever after known in Scotland as Black Saturday. The Scottish defeat

"Bitter rivalry was growing between Catholics and followers of Martin Luther, John Calvin and other Protestant leaders"

was one of the bloodiest ever suffered by an army in the long history of the rivalry between the two kingdoms. One contemporary described the slaughter of the fleeing Scots in these words:

"With blood and slaughter of the enemy, this chase was continued five miles in length westwards from the place of their standing, which was in the fallow fields of Inveresk until Edinburgh Park and well nigh to the gates of the town itself and unto Leith, and in breadth nigh 4 miles, from the Firth sands up towards Dalkeith southward. In all which space, the dead bodies lay as thick as a man may note cattle grazing in a full replenished pasture. The river ran all red with blood, so that in the same chase were counted, as well by some of our men that somewhat diligently did mark it as by some of them taken prisoners, that very much did lament it, to have been slain about 14 thousand."

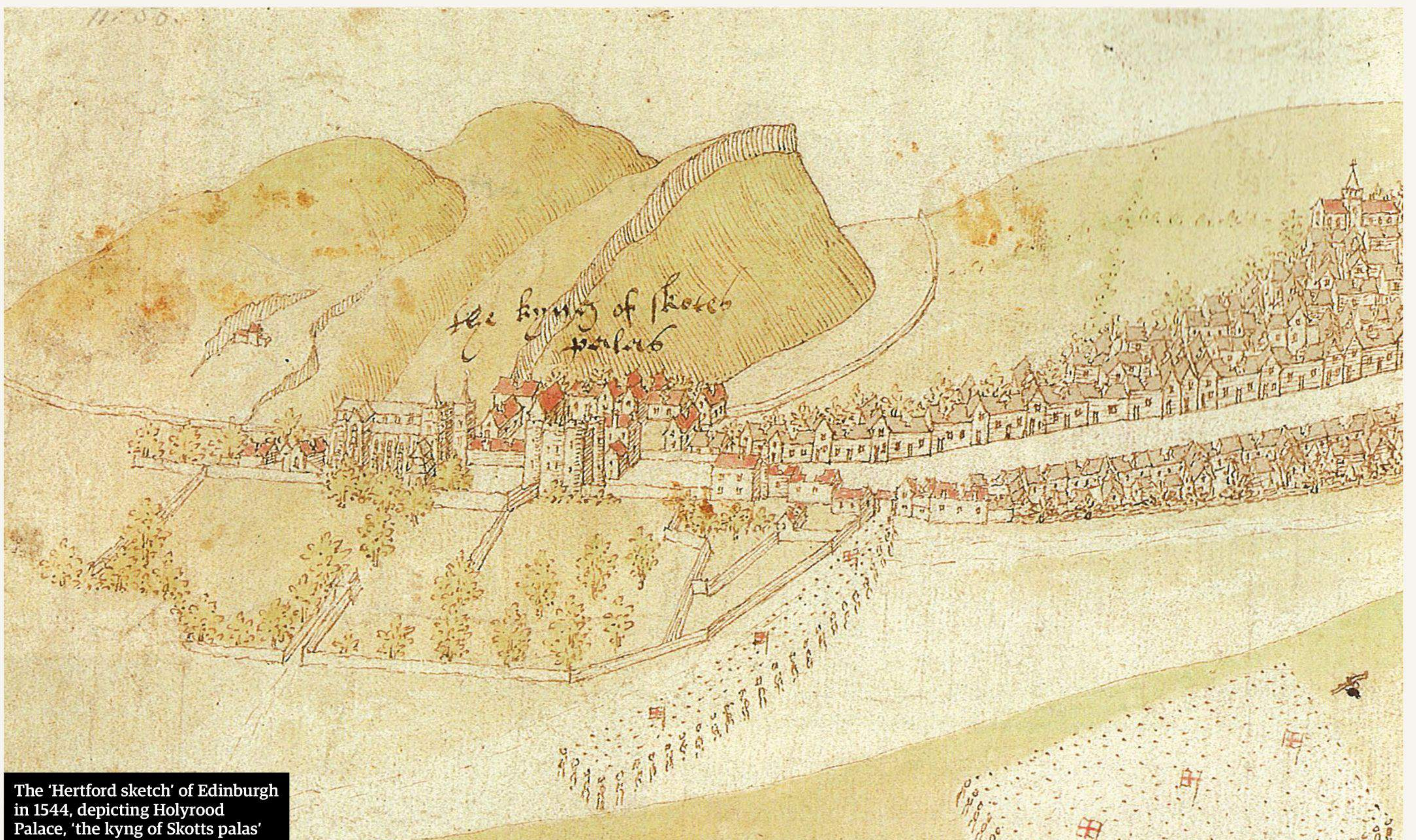
Seemingly oblivious to the impact of this carnage on Scottish public opinion, a few months later Somerset set out his policy in a widely published statement, 'A Epistle or Exhortation to Unity and Peace sent from the Lord Protector ...

to the Nobility ... of Scotland'. The lynch pin of his design was, of course, the marriage of the two child monarchs. But a counter-offer from Henry II, the new French king for Mary, Queen of Scots to be betrothed to his son and heir, the Dauphin Francis, proved more attractive and a fleet was despatched from Brest to bring the infant queen to France. In an attempt to forestall this, Somerset strengthened the English position by further military action, which added to the lowland territory already conquered. At Haddington Castle, east of Edinburgh, he installed a garrison of two-and-a-half thousand men. Despite all this activity Mary was smuggled across to France and pledged in marriage to the dauphin. Scottish defiance asserted itself in a prolonged siege of Haddington Castle, which the English were eventually obliged to abandon in September 1549.

1549 was also the year that Edward Seymour's reign came to an end. Well-intentioned but badly implemented social and religious reforms lost him the support of the ruling class and



Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, acted as Lord Protector during the early reign of Edward VI



The 'Hertford sketch' of Edinburgh in 1544, depicting Holyrood Palace, 'the kyng of Skotts palas'



John Knox, the controversial preacher

of his companions on the regency council. He was stripped of his office and spent several months in the Tower of London. Though he was eventually released and restored to the governing body, he never recovered his former influence and an ill-judged attempt to do so resulted in his execution. The new ruler of the roost was Seymour's old colleague-in-arms, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. He shared much of

his predecessor's enthusiasm for reform but he was also a pragmatist. His priority was repairing England's shattered economy. It was clear that continuance of the French war was a luxury the nation could not afford. In March 1550 peace terms were agreed in the Treaty of Boulogne. The former enemies swore perpetual amity and Scotland ceased to be a bone of contention between them. French and English troops were withdrawn. English claims to overlordship were abandoned, as was the scheme to marry the two young monarchs. In fact, an agreement was reached for the marriage of Edward to Henry II's daughter, Elizabeth. When, in October 1551, Marie de Guise paid a courtesy visit to the English king, she was warmly received. The following year, another round of negotiations restored the frontier between England and Scotland to where it had been before the Rough Wooing. But the euphoria was not widely shared. While the Scots hailed the treaty as a vindication of their cause and a triumph over the old enemy, many proud Englishmen regarded the peace deal as a humiliating sell-out. This was one of several factors which contributed to Northumberland's unpopularity and his overthrow in 1553.

So, had the Rough Wooing been nothing more than an appalling waste of lives and a devastation of property - a senseless exhibition of rival nationalisms? Well, one factor that certainly rendered the whole affair futile was the death of Edward VI in July 1553, three months before his 16th birthday. The union of the crowns that Henry VIII and the Duke of Somerset had so ardently

desired would, thus, never have happened - or, rather, not for another 50 years. But underlying forces more potent than military victories or the demise of kings were stirring in Scotland. The Protestant Reformation was spreading rapidly. It created a bond between the English and a powerful aristocratic community far stronger than anything Tudor governments had been able to engineer. With surprising rapidity the atrocities of the Rough Wooing were, though not forgotten, submerged in the rising waters of religious conflict. Marie de Guise who took over the regency from the Earl of Arran was doomed to spend the rest of her life in a failed attempt to achieve domestic unity.

Her daughter, meanwhile, was growing up in a foreign court and becoming thoroughly Frenchified. Long before her return to her homeland the atmosphere there had been poisoned by preachers who hated her Catholicism and who rejected the very idea of being ruled by a woman. Their leading spokesman, the fiery preacher John Knox, enemy of Marie de Guise, expressed the views of many influential Scots when he wrote about women, "their sight in civil government is but blindness; their strength weakness; their counsel foolishness; and judgement frenzy". There will have been many who, in retrospect, regretted that the English, Protestant wooing of their young queen had not had another outcome.

The Battle of Pinkie Cleugh

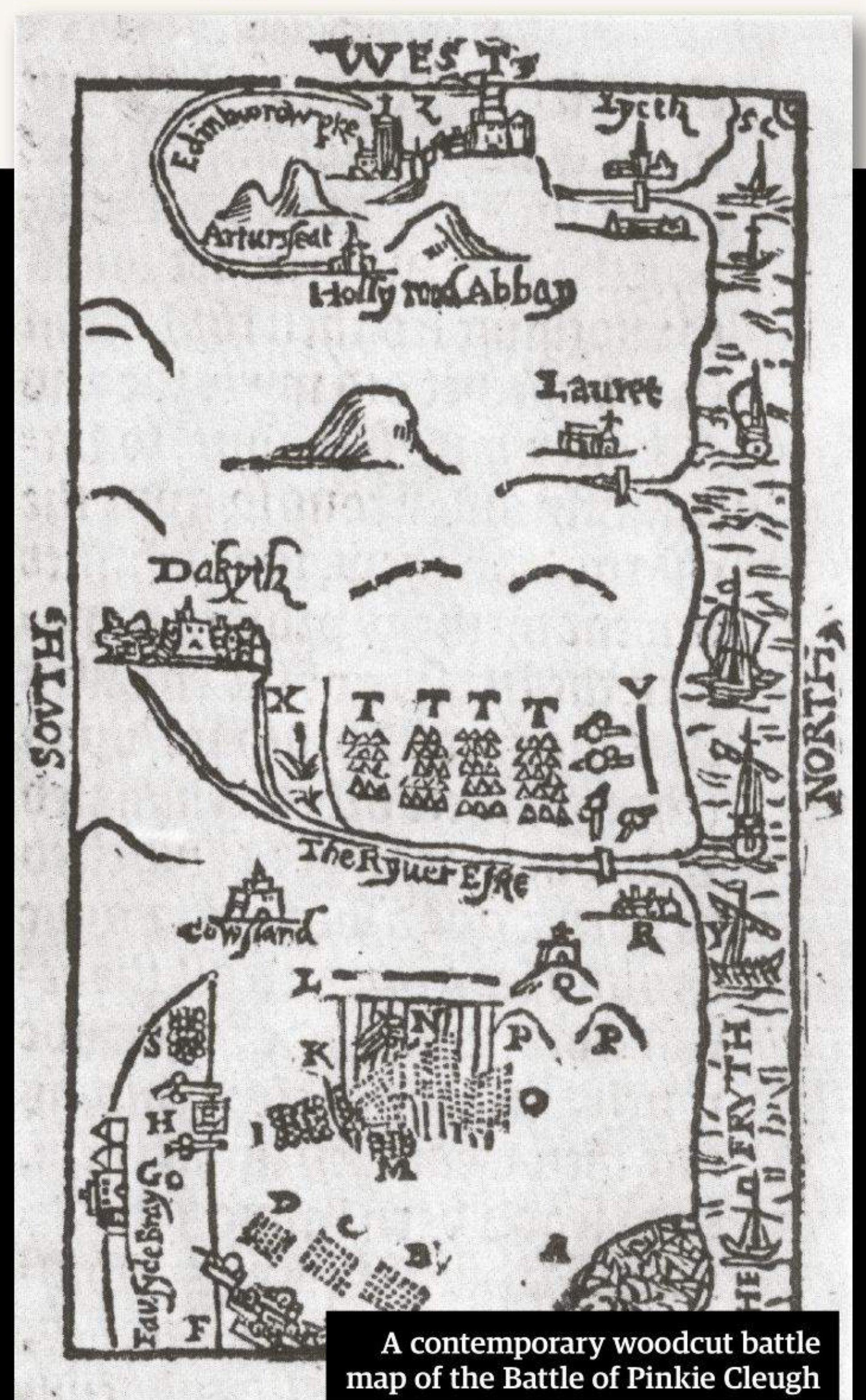
An account of the battle was written by John Hooper, chaplain to Protector Somerset in a letter to a friend in Zurich

"Lord Grey, the king of England's deputy at Boulogne, and the commander in chief of the English cavalry in this battle, after the artillery was silenced, made a charge upon the Scottish front, with a view of throwing them into confusion; but disappointed of his expectation, he was forced to retreat with the loss of forty-eight of his cavalry.

The earl of Warwick, who commanded the archers, perceiving the cavalry to give way, immediately and suddenly advanced with 4000 archers, and attacked that part of the Scottish army where the artillery and baggage were stationed. He so pressed the Scots by the discharge of his arrows, that they were unable any longer to stand to their guns, which having

gained possession of, by his cannon-balls and volleys of arrows he compelled the whole Scottish army to fall back from their former position into one where they had not only the enemy both in front and rear, but also the sun shining full in their eyes. Which when lord Grey perceived, he made a second attack with his cavalry on their flank with much noise and clamour, shouting, 'The Scots are running away, the Scots are running away.'

The Scots, being inferior in cavalry, were quite unable to keep their ranks, which being thrown into disorder, they betook themselves to flight; in the which there fell 15,000 men, and 2,000 were taken prisoners, among whom was lord Huntley, the chancellor of Scotland."



A contemporary woodcut battle map of the Battle of Pinkie Cleugh



According to the Treaty of Greenwich, Edward VI would marry Mary, Queen of Scots



Born to Marie de Guise and James V of Scotland, Mary became Queen at six days old

Mary Stuart's first mistake

The Queen of Scots' long-awaited marriage to Dauphin Francis may have been glittering, but beneath the opulence lurked a dirty secret

Words by Melanie Clegg



Although the 16th century is a period remarkable for the amount of charismatic monarchs and consorts it produced, few have quite the same romantic allure as Mary Queen of Scots, who succeeded

her father James V as Queen of Scotland when just six days old. Mary Stuart's career, her devastating fall from power and subsequent exile have attracted a lot of attention, not all of it sympathetic, not least because it serves as a means to highlight the odds stacked against even the most powerful women during this time.

In contrast to the almost 19 years that she spent in English captivity, Mary's period of personal rule in Scotland was relatively brief. Spanning the six years between her return in August 1561 and her abdication in July 1567, it became increasingly chaotic with each passing year as the reins of power slipped from her hands. Before all of this, however, Mary's star shined very brightly indeed and never more so than on the occasion of her marriage to Francis, Dauphin of France. With Henry VIII as a common enemy, it made sense for Scotland and France to continue their Auld Alliance against the English. Matters became even

more urgent when Henry ramped up hostilities against the Scots in order to force them to hand over their young Queen so that she could be raised at his court in England and eventually married to his heir, Edward, Prince of Wales. In a desperate attempt to buy some time, Marie de Guise publicly let it be known that she favoured the English match while secretly assuring Francis I that she had no intention of letting her daughter fall into English hands. It was her ultimate goal that Mary should eventually unite the thrones of France and Scotland by marrying François's eldest grandson, who was two years younger than her daughter.

When Henry VIII died in January 1547 and was succeeded by his son, Edward, the issue became even more pressing. The young king's uncle and protector, the Earl of Somerset, led an invading army over the border, intending to occupy Scotland, subdue its people and seize Queen Mary. Alarmed, Marie de Guise sent her daughter away and hastily negotiated with the new French King Henry II, promising him Mary could be raised in the French royal nurseries in exchange for a much-needed injection of French troops and military

equipment, which would be used to remove the English from Scotland once and for all.

It was a serious wrench for Marie de Guise to send her only daughter away to France but she knew it was a sacrifice that had to be made in order to ensure the safety of the young Queen and security of her country. The Scots lords may have grumbled about their nation becoming an effective chattel of the French, but the more pragmatic among them recognised that it was far better to be friends with France than to find themselves overrun with the English and, worse still, governed by the English king - a fate that the Scots had proudly and often narrowly managed to avoid for several centuries.

Mary, newly formally betrothed to the French Dauphin, embarked for France at the end of July 1548 and would not return to her native Scotland for 13 years. Upon her arrival at the French court, she was welcomed with open arms by Henry II, although his wife, Catherine de' Medici, was rather more reserved when it came to the little Scottish Queen. The two would never enjoy a particularly warm relationship. Naturally everyone was keen

"The young Queen of Scots looked radiant with happiness and drew all focus in a gown of shimmering white silk"



A 16th-century double portrait of James V and his wife, Marie of Guise



An etching of Mary, Queen of Scots

to see how Mary got on with the Dauphin, and to Henry's great relief, the two became great friends with Francis quickly developing a childish crush on the vibrant and charming Mary, who was an pretty child with auburn hair, hazel eyes and a porcelain complexion. It was his sister, Elisabeth, who would become her best friend though, and the two girls shared a bedchamber and their lessons for most of their childhood.

While her mother battled with the recalcitrant Scots and the ever-constant threat of English invasion, Mary enjoyed an idyllic childhood at the French royal palaces, where her rank and personal charm meant she swiftly became rather spoilt and inevitably grew up with a very high opinion of herself, expecting adoration and applause at all times. Although she was never allowed to forget that she was an anointed Queen in her own right, she was nonetheless encouraged to think of herself as more French than Scottish and tutored in the French language as well as other essential skills such as dancing, music, poetry and riding. There were other equally important but less formal lessons to be learned at the French court and it was probably under the tutelage of Henry II's mistress, Diane de Poitiers, that Mary learned how to utilise the charms she had been naturally blessed with in order to get her own way. She would later discover, however, that not all men were apt to be rendered completely helpless by one of her winsome smiles.

While Mary's Scottish subjects regarded the forthcoming match with some misgiving, understandably worried that they would become powerless chattels of the French, her French relatives were overjoyed at the prospect of seeing

her on the throne. Her mother was the eldest daughter of Claude de Guise, a younger brother of the Duc de Lorraine and a man of great integrity who had risen to prominence at court and a dukedom of his own thanks to his friendship with Francis I and several daring acts of military prowess during the Italian Wars. It was not for nothing that the Guise-Lorraine family motto was 'All for one and one for all' (later famously adopted by Dumas' musketeers) for to this close knit and ambitious clan, family

was everything and they would stop at nothing to place themselves and their relatives in positions of power. The marriage of Marie de Guise to King James V of Scotland in 1538 had been their greatest coup to date and considerably boosted the family's fortunes and influence, but now, 20 years later, they

The marriage was formally announced in the great hall of the Louvre palace on 19 April 1558. Mary was just 15 years old while her fiancé was 14, and they must have made an odd couple as they appeared before the courtiers to have their hands joined by the Cardinal de Lorraine before making their vows and exchanging rings to formalise the betrothal. Mary was already unusually tall for her age, having inherited the willowy physique of her mother, and glowed with health and vitality, while in contrast, Francis was abnormally short, pasty complexioned, sullen and awkward. Their devotion to each other was obvious, however, and did much to compensate for their obvious physical disparity.

The wedding itself took place less than a week later on Sunday 24 April and was an expensive extravaganza designed to flaunt the unprecedented importance of this match between a Dauphin of France and the reigning monarch of another nation. This would bring the long-desired crown of England finally within the grasp of the French should they be bold enough to reach out and take it. Mary spent the night before her wedding in the palace of the Bishop of Paris, and from there the wedding procession walked the short distance to Notre Dame, protected from any rain by an ornately decorated covered walkway that led to a 12-foot-high stage in front of the cathedral's west front. Everything was designed to ensure the royal party,

"She would later discover that not all men were apt to be rendered completely helpless by one of her winsome smiles"

were about to achieve an even grander match for Mary, and they were delighted at the prospect.

Mary's most prominent Guise uncles, Francis, Duc de Guise, and Charles, Cardinal de Lorraine, were particularly gleeful about the fact that their niece was about to become Dauphine of France and caused quite a few hackles to rise at court by throwing their weight around and demanding extra honours for both Mary and themselves in order to reflect her new status. It was at their insistence that Mary was given her own separate household, which was run along ruinously expensive lines - all funded by Marie de Guise, who had to draw upon her own limited resources to keep her daughter in style. More dangerously though, the brothers made no secret of the fact that their ultimate goal was to see Mary and Francis on the English throne, arguing that should Queen Mary I die without an heir, their niece's claim was far superior to that of Mary's half-sister, Elizabeth, and ignoring the fact that Henry VIII's will had excluded the Stuart descendants of his sister from the succession.



Francis during his time as Dauphin of France, as captured by François Clouet

"Mercifully unaware of the chaos outside, Mary and Francis processed to the royal closet in the chancel"

in particular the bride and groom, were visible at all times - to the delight of the enormous crowd that had gathered in order to see them go past.

The festivities began at ten in the morning when the king's Swiss guards emerged, followed by Mary's uncle Francis, Duc de Guise, who had been appointed grand master of the king's household for the day and was acting as master of ceremonies. It was at his signal that the king's musicians began to play as the gentlemen of the royal household, princes of the blood and then princes of the church, bearing crucifixes and holy relics, made their way to the stage, which was festooned with blue silk embroidered with gold fleurs-de-lis. Last to appear were the royal party, their jewels gleaming in the spring sunshine, with the groom walking with his younger brothers Charles and Henry while behind him his blushing, beautiful bride was escorted by his father and her cousin, the Duc de Lorraine.

The young Queen of Scots looked radiant with happiness and drew all focus in a gown of shimmering white silk encrusted with pearls and diamonds and trailing a long dove grey velvet train, which was carried by two young maids of honour. Beneath a richly ornamented crown, her long red hair flowed unbound down her back, while around her neck there hung the spectacular Great Harry pendant, a wedding gift from her doting

father-in-law. Mary's choice of a white wedding dress was a bold move at a time when white was traditionally worn by widowed queens of France, and the fact that she would undoubtedly have been aware of this suggests that even at this stage, when she is commonly described as being entirely under the thumb of her uncles, Mary knew her own mind and was quite capable of getting her own way if she so chose. Traditionally, royal French brides wore rich crimsons, purples and cloth of gold to reflect their exalted status but Mary knew that her colouring would be better enhanced by pure white - a colour that a more mature woman could not pull off but that only served to accentuate her youthful beauty.

As was traditional, the young couple were married on the podium outside the cathedral so that the crowd were able to watch as the Cardinal-Archbishop of Rouen performed the ceremony and Francis pushed a ring taken from his father's own hand onto his bride's finger. Not wishing anyone to miss his family's triumph, the Duc de Guise, who was always keen to court the approval of the populace even if it harmed his popularity at court, insisted the heralds should hustle the guests off the stage and into the church, leaving only the main participants in plain view, much to the crowd's delight. He then, as the royal party made their way



A young Mary Stuart as drawn by Clouet around the same time as Francis' portrait

in to the cathedral, ordered the heralds to shout "largesse" and begin hurling a vast quantity of gold and silver coins into the crowd, causing a riot as they surged forward to help themselves. Several people fainted in the crush and it was a miracle that no one died before Guise was persuaded to halt his generosity.

Meanwhile, mercifully unaware of the chaos outside, Mary and Francis processed to the royal closet in the chancel where they knelt on cloth

Stuarts versus Tudors

After centuries of feuding, the ever-strong bitterness between the Scottish and English thrones remained strong

The ongoing feud between the rulers of Scotland and England rumbled on for several centuries but reached its peak during the 16th century during the reign of Henry VIII. The marriage of his elder sister Margaret Tudor to the Scottish King James IV in 1503 was intended to seal the Treaty of Perpetual Peace between the two nations, who had been at loggerheads for almost 200 years, but had fallen apart within ten years when James, albeit unwillingly at the behest of his French allies, went to war against the English in 1513. The death of James in that year's battle of Flodden only served to intensify hostilities between the two nations and their ruling houses, the Tudors and the Stuarts. Although the new king of Scotland, James V was the nephew of Henry VIII, the two monarchs failed to see eye to eye and when James took

the French princess Madeleine as his bride, cementing the Auld Alliance between Scotland and England's other great enemy, France, Henry was furious.

When Madeleine died after just a few months of marriage and James made overtures to French noblewoman Marie de Guise, Henry, who was envious of his nephew's youth and good looks, was so annoyed that he attempted to marry Marie himself in order to spitefully scupper both James's match and also the alliance between Scotland and France. Luckily for Marie, the Scottish marriage went ahead but Henry would remain a thorn in her side for several years to come after James V suddenly died of illness after losing a battle against his English uncle's forces in December 1542, leaving his infant daughter Mary to inherit the throne as Queen of Scotland.



King Henry VIII tried to win the heart of Marie de Guise in an attempt to scupper James V's match

of gold cushions to receive the sacrament then watched the Bishop of Paris perform the nuptial mass. There was more dispensing of coins during the offertory, this time to the guests who presumably behaved with rather more decorum than the crowd outside. Once the religious formalities had been completed, the newlyweds left the candlelit gloom of the great cathedral then, at the behest of King Henry, made another circuit of the stage so that everyone could see them and they could acknowledge the cheers of the crowd. Like many a male royal consort before and since, Francis didn't seem to mind at all that most of the enthusiasm was directed at his bride.

They then returned to the Bishop's Palace for a banquet in the magnificently decorated great hall. Exhausted by what had been a very long and tiring morning, Mary complained to her father-in-law that her crown was beginning to hurt her head and he ordered that it be removed and held above her as she ate. She was not allowed much time to rest after the banquet was over either, for it was followed by a ball, which she opened with her father-in-law while Francis partnered his mother. This went on until five in the afternoon when there was another procession, this time to the Palais du Justice for the evening celebrations. As it lay only a few yards away from Notre Dame on the Isle de Cité, this second procession took a circuitous route so that the crowds that had thronged the capital's streets all afternoon could get a glimpse of the royal family as they went by. Luckily, Mary was not expected to walk the processional route but this time travelled in a cloth of gold litter beside her mother-in-law, while Francis rode on horseback with his father.

Upon their arrival at the Palais du Justice, the royal party were treated to another banquet followed by dancing and a series of elaborate masques and pageants, including one where beautiful court maidens appeared dressed as the muses in golden chariots, all proclaiming the virtues of the new Dauphine while later on the Dauphin's younger brothers rode through the hall on gold and silver hobby horses. Even more impressive though was the pageant at the very end of the night when six exquisitely decorated mechanical ships appeared. One of the ships was steered by King Henry, whose vessel bore him to Mary, who he invited to join him while the Dauphin once again partnered his mother.

As the ships circled the hall and the young Queen laughed with delight, a narrator informed the guests that the vessels represented the voyage of the Argonauts to seize the Golden Fleece with King Henry as Jason and Mary as the Fleece, the golden prize with which he would unite the three nations of France, Scotland and England. There



ait de Viande LIEBIG

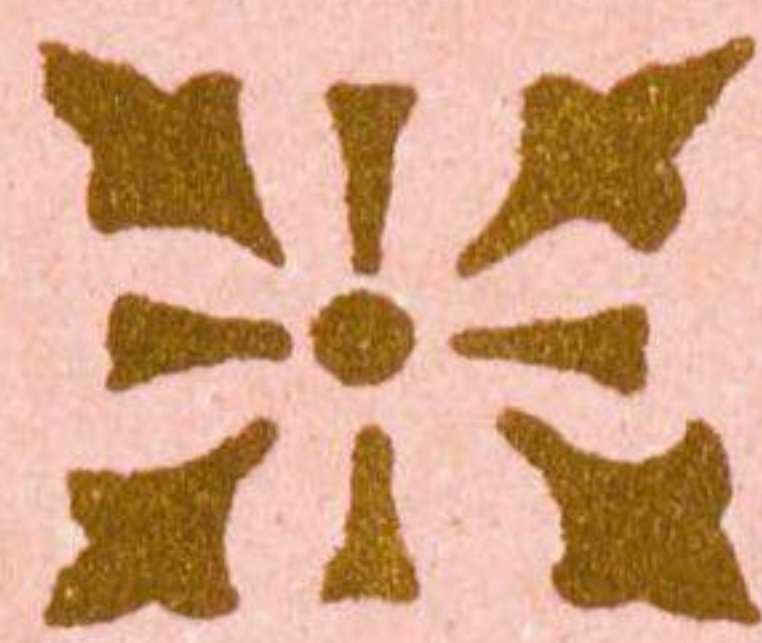
1558



Exiger la signature LIEBIG en encre bleue
sur l'étiquette et le papier
qui enveloppe le pot.

Liebig

JOIS II ET DE MARIE STUART.



VOIR AU VERSO.

then followed a series of epic poems that extolled Mary as the means by which France and England would be bound together forever when she and Francis became founders of the greatest dynasty that Europe had ever seen, greater even than that governed by the Habsburgs. It was all heady stuff and no one seems to have worried about how all this vainglorious posturing would be viewed across the Channel in England where Mary I was ailing and her sister was poised to take the throne or in Spain where her husband Philip II was keen to retain a proprietary interest in his English demesne.

While the banquet in the Bishop's Palace had been an intimate affair for the highest ranking courtiers, that evening's celebration was a more ceremonial event attended by the entire court as well as foreign ambassadors and guests who had flocked to Paris in order to witness the ceremony. Among them were Scottish lords who were treated

with particular courtesy by their French hosts, not least because they were viewed as the emissaries of Mary's mother who was unable to make the journey herself. If the Scots had any misgivings about the match, which would both bring them French protection against the English but also potentially leave them vulnerable to French demands that they invade England at some point, they were at least mollified by the generosity of the French king, who ensured they were handsomely lodged and well treated. They

might have been rather less pleased, however, had they been aware that at Fontainebleau just 20 days earlier, their Queen had signed her name to three secret documents that effectively handed her nation to the French should she die without an heir. The first document was a deed stating that, "In consideration of the singular and perfect affection that the kings of France have always had to the protection and maintenance of the kingdom of Scotland against the English," both Scotland and that all important



A silver medal commemorating the marriage, 1558

The three husbands of Mary Stuart

Discover the main men in the life of Mary, Queen of Scots



Francis II of France

b.1544-d.1560

Francis was the eldest son of Henry II and his Italian wife Catherine de' Medici, and the couple were married for 11 years before they managed to produce a much longed-for child. Destined from the cradle to be the husband of his distant cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, Francis was raised alongside his fiancée before they were finally married in April 1558, when he was just 14 years old. Then, just over a year later, the 15-year-old Francis inherited the French throne when his father died as the result of a jousting accident. King Francis II reigned for just 17 months before dying of complications from an ear infection that led to an abscess in his brain. Mary returned to Scotland nine months after his death.



Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley

b.1545-d.1567

As the eldest son of Matthew Stewart, 4th Earl of Lennox, and Lady Margaret Douglas, the only daughter of Henry VIII's eldest sister Margaret Tudor and her second husband, Darnley had claims to the thrones of both Scotland and England. However, like his first cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, he had been barred from the latter by the last will of Henry VIII. Mary quickly decided to marry him after their second meeting in February 1565, despite or perhaps because of their cousin Elizabeth I's strong opposition to the match. The marriage was a disaster almost from the beginning, ending with Darnley's brutal murder amid the debris of an explosion at the house where he was staying in Edinburgh.



James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell

b.1534-d.1578

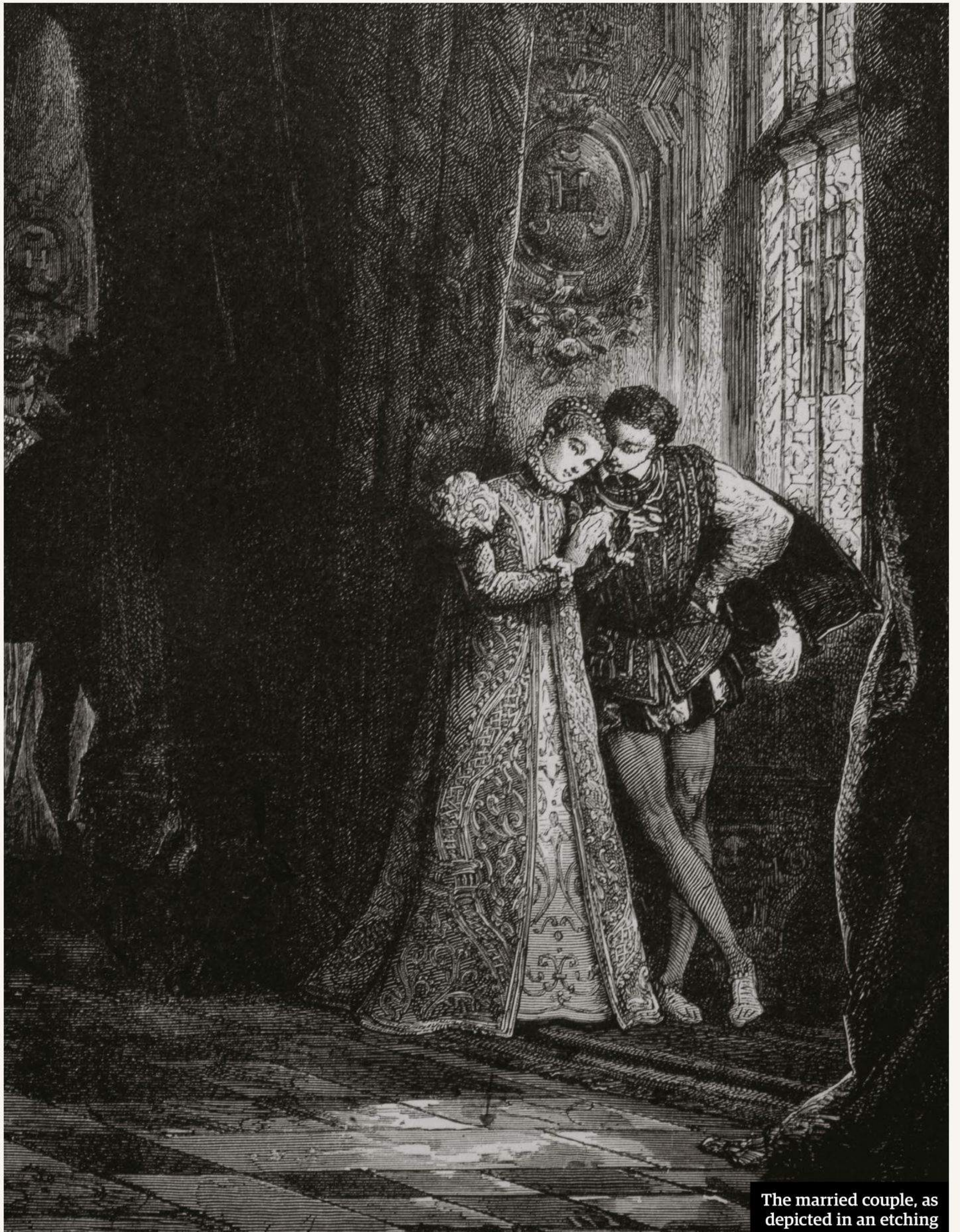
Bothwell was one of Mary's closest supporters when she returned to Scotland. Bothwell was implicated in the murder of Mary's second husband but was acquitted in April 1567 even though it is probable he was indeed responsible. Later that month, Bothwell abducted Mary and allegedly forced her to become his wife, although there are reasons to believe she was a willing participant and the 'abduction' story was a clumsy attempt to mollify Bothwell's enemies at court. Their subsequent downfall was swift and brutal - after the couple went their separate ways, Bothwell was imprisoned in Denmark and died insane in a dungeon beneath Dragsholm Castle.



A 19th-century replica of a contemporary portrait of Mary in mourning garb

claim to the English throne would be inherited by the kings of France in the event of Mary's death without an heir and would become a permanent part of the demesne of the French Dauphins. In the second document, Mary agreed that should she die without any heirs, the kings of France would have full rights to all Scottish revenue until they had repaid the 1 million pieces of gold that had allegedly been spent on Mary's education and the defence of her country against the English. As Scotland was not exactly the wealthiest of nations, this financial obligation was guaranteed to keep them under French control for several generations. The third document was signed by both Mary and Francis and affirmed that the other two documents were fully legal and valid and would remain so irrespective of any future developments.

It seems shocking that a reigning monarch should so carelessly hand her own country over as a 'gift' to another nation and furthermore knowingly saddle them with a crippling debt that may never be paid off, but Mary was just 15 and acting under the advice of her Guise uncles that she had come to trust implicitly. Not only that but she had become disassociated from her own Scottish heritage and had no idea that her people would be dismayed by the prospect of becoming a French chattel. To her naïve mind, the French were generous with their Scottish allies and could presumably be relied upon to protect their interests should she be unable to do so herself. However, the secrecy that surrounded these documents (they were not to be discovered until the reign of Louis XIV over a century later) should have alerted Mary to the fact she was acting against the interests of her own people. Certainly the Scottish lords who



The married couple, as depicted in an etching

attended her wedding had some idea that the great show of friendship was hiding something altogether murkier - a suspicion that was only strengthened when Mary's uncle, the Cardinal de Lorraine, demanded that the crown of Scotland be brought to France and placed with the rest of the crown jewels in the Basilica of Saint Denis - a request that was furiously rejected by the Scots.

The wedding celebrations went on for several days and involved banquets and balls in the Louvre and the traditional tournament in front of the Hôtel de Tournelles in the Marais. No one watching the 39-year-old Henry II riding out in his armour that day could ever have imagined that just over a year later he would be fatally injured on that very

same spot during the wedding festivities for his daughter Elisabeth and Philip II of Spain, leaving his teenaged son and daughter-in-law to become rulers of France.

For Mary, this would mark another high point, albeit one tinged with tragedy, in her dramatic career, but as she left Paris with her husband to enjoy their honeymoon at the Château de Villers-Cotterêts in Picardy, she was untroubled by the storm clouds gathering overhead and her thoughts were almost certainly focused on the triumphant present, for as she would later write to her mother she accounted herself "one of the happiest women in the world," and at that moment in time, had every reason to believe herself so.

A detailed oil painting of Mary, Queen of Scots, by Robert Peake the Elder. She is depicted from the chest up, wearing a dark, patterned gown with a wide, ornate white lace collar. Her hair is dark and styled in a bun. She has a contemplative expression, resting her chin on her right hand. The background is dark and indistinct.

A portrait of a lady said to be
Mary, Queen of Scots, as painted
by Robert Peake the Elder

The Catholic heir of England

Already queen of Scotland and dauphine of France,
many considered that Mary also became queen
of England in November 1558

Words by Elizabeth Norton



It is well known that Elizabeth I's accession to the crown of England in November 1558 was met with rejoicing. Yet, although many people were glad to see Henry VIII's younger daughter succeed to the throne, there were some that

did not consider her to be the lawful heir. Europe's Catholics, in particular, believed Mary, Queen of Scots, to be the true queen of England.

Mary I of England died in the early hours of 17 November 1558. Although the queen had been in ill health for some time her death at the age of 42 was largely unexpected. Mary, who was Henry VIII's daughter by his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, had swept to the throne in 1553 on a wave of popular acclaim. After marrying Philip of Spain in 1554 she had expected to quickly bear an heir to ensure the Catholic succession. Two phantom pregnancies and her husband's frequent absences frustrated this ambition, however.

Estranged from her half-sister, Princess Elizabeth, Mary refused to name her as her successor. She instead stated in her will that her heir would be determined "by the laws and statutes of this realm". For most, this vague provision meant Elizabeth, but it was open to interpretation.

Henry VIII had been the only surviving son of Henry VII, who was the first king of the Tudor dynasty and himself an only child. As such, the succession and the fate of his dynasty rested heavy on the second Tudor monarch. When Henry VIII's first wife failed to produce a son he ushered in the break with Rome and English Reformation in order to allow him to marry Anne Boleyn in 1533. While for Henry his first marriage had never been valid due to the fact that Catherine had previously been the wife of his elder brother, his annulment was not recognised by the Pope or Catholic Europe. As a result the second marriage - to Anne Boleyn - was always invalid in Catholic eyes.

Mary Tudor was the only surviving child of Henry's first marriage. She was declared illegitimate in the first Act of Succession, which was passed in 1534. Anne Boleyn's only surviving child, Princess Elizabeth, met the same fate under the terms of the Second Act of Succession, which was passed in 1536. At the same time the king, who then had no legitimate children, was given the unprecedented power to name his own successor in letters patent



Catholic Mary Tudor, whom Mary Stuart hoped to succeed as Mary II of England

or his will, in defiance of the rules of hereditary. He probably intended it to benefit his illegitimate son, Henry FitzRoy, but this power was to have profound implications in the lives of his two daughters and the descendants of his sisters.

Henry's third wife produced a son, Edward, in 1537, who remained his father's only legitimate child, in spite of the king marrying a further three times. While Edward was a promising and

seemingly healthy child, the succession was far from settled. As a result, Henry VIII returned his two 'illegitimate' daughters to the succession by Act of Parliament in 1544, but he declined to legitimise them. They were therefore heirs to the throne only on the basis of statute law, and not by any hereditary right.

Mary and Elizabeth Tudor's position as heirs following Edward was reinforced by Henry VIII's will, which he made shortly before his death in January 1547. While there was always some doubt over whether this testament was validly signed, it does seem to have been drafted in accordance with the old king's wishes. Under its terms the crown was to pass first to Edward

"Mary and Elizabeth Tudor's position as heirs following Edward was reinforced by Henry VIII's will"

A Catholic rival

Mary, Queen of Scots was not the only Catholic to lay claim to the English crown

Mary, Queen of Scots was not the only Catholic with a strong claim to the English throne. Her father's half-sister, Lady Margaret Douglas, was considered by some to have become the rightful queen of England in 1558.

Lady Margaret Douglas was the only child of Margaret Tudor's stormy second marriage to Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus. She was born at Harbottle in 1515, as her mother was fleeing Scotland for her brother's protection in England. After an early childhood in which she passed between the custody of her warring parents, she was finally sent to be raised by Henry VIII with his daughter, Mary.

At the English court Margaret was considered "beautiful and highly esteemed". Henry VIII arranged her marriage to the Scottish nobleman Matthew Stuart, Earl of Lennox, and the pair lived mainly in England together. By 1558 Margaret was the mother of two surviving sons, who were then the only surviving male descendants of Henry VIII. Her staunch religious beliefs, combined with her English birth and upbringing, made her the perfect candidate for the throne in the eyes of many English Catholics. While on friendly terms with her niece, Mary, Queen of Scots, she was also her rival.



Margaret Douglas was a favourite of her uncle, Henry VIII, who raised her at his court and arranged her marriage

"Some considered the Catholic Margaret Douglas to have the superior claim"

and his hypothetical children, then the still legally illegitimate Mary and Elizabeth in turn. Should all three of Henry's children die without heirs the crown was to pass next to the descendants of his younger sister, Mary, who had married first Louis XII of France and then Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. The descendants of Henry VIII's elder sister, Margaret, Queen of Scotland, were passed over.

The young Edward VI had initially seemed healthy, with negotiations even opened for his marriage to his cousin, Mary Stuart, then living in France. After an attack of what the young king himself believed to be both measles and smallpox early in 1552, his health never recovered. By early 1553 it was clear that he was dying. Edward had been raised as a fervent Protestant and was alarmed at the prospect of his Catholic half-sister, Mary, succeeding. With the young king's collusion, his chief minister, the Duke of Northumberland, attempted to change the succession.

When Edward died in July 1553, Jane Grey, who was a granddaughter of Mary Tudor, Duchess of Suffolk, was proclaimed as queen on the grounds of Mary and Elizabeth's illegitimacy. Although a Protestant candidate, she failed to win the public's support. After overthrowing Jane following a reign of just nine days, Mary Tudor had her own legitimacy reinstated by an Act of Parliament, which confirmed the validity of her parents' marriage. Elizabeth, who was born during the lifetime of Mary's mother, remained illegitimate, and her claim to the crown therefore questionable.

Although the descendants of Margaret Tudor were excluded from the succession by Henry VIII, they remained the senior hereditary line. Margaret had produced two surviving children: James V of Scotland and his English-born half-sister, Margaret Douglas. Margaret Douglas had been raised at the English court. Her royal uncle was fond of her, but he had a notoriously stormy relationship with his Scottish nephew. When James had died prematurely in 1542, Henry's attempts to marry the young Mary, Queen of Scots to his son had further soured the relationship, leading to war with Scotland. While this was enough for Henry VIII to attempt to exclude his elder sister's descendants from the succession, their closeness to the English throne was widely recognised.



16-year-old Mary, depicted at approximately the time she first claimed the English crown



Mary's father-in-law, Henry II of France, was determined to promote her as queen of England

Some considered the Catholic Margaret Douglas to have the superior claim, both due to the fact that she was English and that she was the mother of healthy sons. Most, however, recognised James V's daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots, as the next hereditary heir after Henry VIII's issue. Since Elizabeth was illegitimate both to Catholics and in English statute law, under the rules of hereditary and in the eyes of many, Mary, Queen of Scots became queen of England on 17 November 1558.

Mary, Queen of Scots' father-in-law, Henry II of France, certainly agreed. On hearing of Mary I's death, the French king formally caused Mary to



be proclaimed as queen of England, Ireland and Scotland, with his son, the Dauphin Francis, also adopting the title of king of England. The couple also immediately added the royal arms of England to those of France and Scotland in their coat of arms. Mary, who had never visited England nor met with her English cousins, was required by her father-in-law to wear mourning for Mary Tudor as a mark of her status as the English queen's heir.

The English ambassador sent alarming news home in December 1558, noting that they "did not let to say and talk openly that Her Highness [Elizabeth] is not lawful queen of England and they have already sent to Rome to disprove her right". Mary Stuart's uncle, the Cardinal of Lorraine, also lobbied the pope to excommunicate Elizabeth and spoke openly of an invasion of England. There was, of course, little doubt that the pope would favour Mary over the Protestant Elizabeth.

It is debatable how much input the 16-year-old Mary had in the decision to claim the English crown on her behalf, although she undoubtedly approved. She was driven by a desire to become queen of England for the rest of her life. England, which was larger, more populous and considerably more wealthy than Scotland, was always central to her ambitions.

The possibility of a Scottish monarch succeeding to the English throne had in fact first been raised when her grandparents had been betrothed at the end of the 15th century. On being questioned about the wisdom of sending his eldest daughter to Scotland, Henry VII had declared, "I forsee that our realm would suffer no harm, since England would not be absorbed by Scotland, but rather Scotland by England, being the noblest head of the entire island". The prestige of becoming queen of England was attractive to Mary. She certainly seems to

A Protestant rival

Under the terms of Henry VIII's will, Mary's Protestant cousin, Katherine Grey, became heir to the throne in 1558

Henry VIII's will prioritised the descendants of his younger sister, Mary, over those of his elder sister, Margaret. Katherine, as the daughter of Mary's eldest daughter, Frances Brandon, was the senior representative of this line in 1558.

Katherine Grey was arguably Mary, Queen of Scots' leading rival in the quest to be acknowledged as Elizabeth's heir. She was certainly recognised as such by Spain, with Philip II considering a proposal early in Elizabeth's reign to abduct Katherine and marry her to his son, Don Carlos. This would have provided the Spanish with an English heir to rival France's Mary, Queen of Scots, although the Spanish lost interest on learning of Katherine's Protestantism.

Elizabeth disliked both Katherine and her younger sister, Mary, although she was obliged to keep them at court. In late 1560 Katherine risked her future by secretly marrying Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford. The following August she was discovered to be eight-months pregnant and was sent to the Tower. Even imprisoned Katherine remained a leading claimant, with moves made to fetch her from the Tower in 1562 when Elizabeth was believed to be dying of smallpox. Katherine remained under house arrest until her early death in 1568.



While Mary had the strongest hereditary claim, many considered Katherine Grey to be the legal heir to the throne

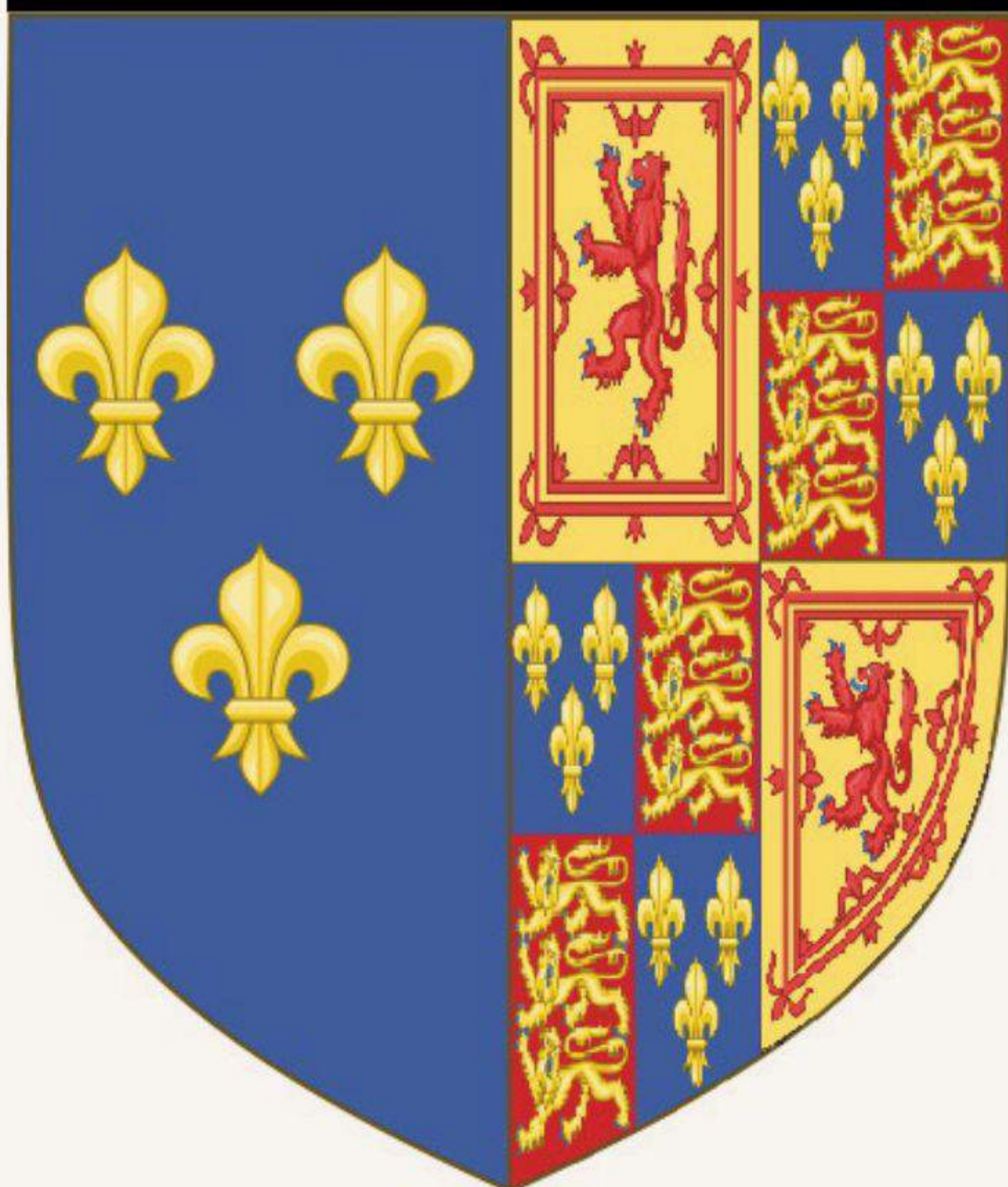
have little ambition to establish a personal rule in Scotland at that stage in her life. On 4 April 1558, in advance of her wedding to Francis, she had already secretly gifted her Scottish crown and her claim to England to the French king in the event that she died without issue.

Henry II's promotion of his daughter-in-law's claims was driven more by his war with Spain. His Spanish rival, Philip II, backed Elizabeth's accession in an attempt to maintain an interest in his deceased wife's kingdom. He would later reluctantly - and unsuccessfully - propose marriage to his English sister-in-law. He also took an interest

Even after making peace with England in 1559, Francis and Mary continued to claim four kingdoms: France, Scotland, England and Ireland



Mary's coat of arms, which showed her as queen of France, Scotland and England, were highly offensive to Elizabeth



in Katherine Grey - another possible candidate for the throne as Jane Grey's younger sister. Mary, Queen of Scots, made a convenient French candidate to counterbalance Spanish interests.

In France, the idea that Mary was also queen of England was enthusiastically adopted, with writers speaking of her Tudor descent and the imminent union of the crowns of France, England and Scotland. To Elizabeth's fury she continued to claim England following Francis' accession as king of France in July 1559. That November the couple made a state entry to Chatelherault with the arms of England, France and Scotland painted on the gates of the town to be seen as they approached. A canopy with the same arms was carried over Mary's head. Even Mary's silver plate was engraved with the English royal arms. A seal depicting Mary and Francis, which was made in 1559, named them as king and queen of France, England, Scotland and Ireland.

Elizabeth had attended mass during the reign of her Catholic half-sister, but it was well known that she was a Protestant. Within months of her accession she broke the English church away from Rome once more, creating a new, Protestant Church of England. This caused considerable consternation among her Catholic subjects, with it illegal for them to attend Catholic services in England. On the continent, Elizabeth's 'heretical' beliefs were also well known. Although Scotland had undergone a Protestant Reformation of its own during the early years of Mary Stuart's reign, the Scottish queen, who was raised at the French court, remained a devout Catholic. She therefore appeared to many in England and on the continent as the Catholic claimant and as a woman who would return England to the traditional church.

Mary's religion, as well as her unquestionable legitimacy and her French backing, made her a major threat to Elizabeth's position. France's war with Spain and England finally came to an end, however, with the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, which was signed on 3 April 1559. As part of the agreement Henry II accepted Elizabeth as queen, with Mary ceasing to call herself queen of England after this date.

Neither the French king nor his daughter-in-law were prepared to entirely abandon their English ambitions, however. This was made plain during the festivities in June surrounding the two marriages agreed under the terms of the treaty: that of Philip of Spain to Elisabeth of Valois and Henry's sister Margaret to Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy.

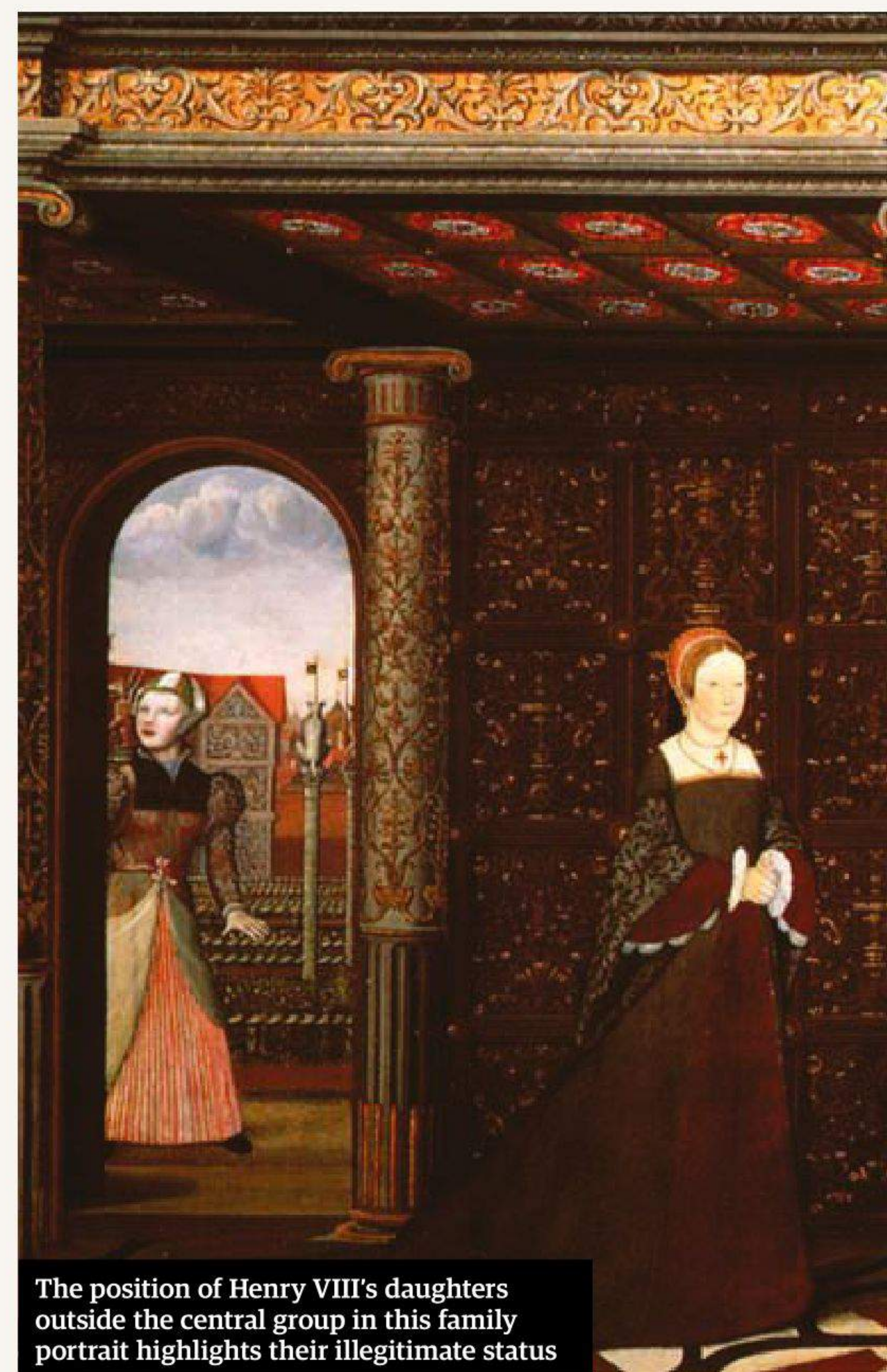
During the first marriage, Mary's arms were again displayed depicting the royal arms of England, Scotland and France, while verses set out prominently during the celebrations named her as

"Of Scotland queen, and England too". She was also referred to as queen of Ireland - a kingdom also held by the English monarchs.

At the tournament held in honour of the second marriage, both Mary and Francis were noted to have sat under a canopy bearing the arms of England, again combined with those of France and Scotland. When the English ambassador complained, he was tartly told that Elizabeth I herself used the French royal arm. This was indeed true, with England's monarchs claiming to be kings of France since the 14th century, in spite of having no hereditary right due to the Salic law which barred female inheritance.

The English queen took Mary's assumption of the English arms as a major slight, particularly since Mary had continued to bear them after Henry II's death following a jousting accident in July 1559. On 16 July it was noted that Mary went to her chapel accompanied by ushers proclaiming her title as queen of England, while she and Francis also made at least one grant as king and queen of England.

Elizabeth did not dispute Mary's Tudor descent, but instructed her ambassador to tell Mary that "her father, the King of Scots, being higher than she, never bare the same; nor by the laws of the land is she next heir". To this, Francis and Mary's



The position of Henry VIII's daughters outside the central group in this family portrait highlights their illegitimate status

agent replied that “the bearing of the English arms by the French queen was thought in France to be done for the honour of Elizabeth and to show that the French queen was her cousin”.

Mary only finally agreed to abandon the English royal arms following the drawing up of the Treaty of Edinburgh in 1560, which sought to bring peace between England and Scotland. While she agreed to abide by this aspect of the treaty, however, she always refused to ratify it. This reluctance was most likely due to her continuing desire to wear the crown of England and, in the years following the treaty's drafting, Mary pressed Elizabeth to formally name her as her successor.

It suited Elizabeth to pretend to believe that Mary had been a French pawn after peace was proclaimed in 1560. She was prepared to believe, she said, that Mary's claim to be queen of England had been fostered by her mother's family - the ambitious house of Guise - and that Francis and Mary had been misled by reason of their youth. In return, Mary dropped the English arms from

her coat of arms, reverting to her red Scottish lion combined with Francis' fleur-de-lis.

However, her pretensions were remembered. For Mary, the idea that she was the hereditary heiress to England remained central to her ambitions. For Elizabeth, who resented the claims that she was not England's legitimate queen, they festered. While in 1560 she was prepared to accept that Mary, like Francis, was 'very young', the Scottish queen's assumption of the English royal arms would be raised again, and were never forgotten.

Mary almost certainly had no agency in the decision made on her behalf in 1558 to claim the English throne. It was, nonetheless, clear to everyone that the idea had appealed to her, as her continued use of the English arms and style had shown. From the very day of Elizabeth's accession, Mary Stuart had emerged as a formidable - and dangerously Catholic - rival heir to the English crown, with this fact central to the relationship between the two women for the next three decades.

“Mary only finally agreed to abandon the English royal arms following the drawing up of the Treaty of Edinburgh in 1560”



Mary's ambitious Guise uncle, the Cardinal de Lorraine





Mary, Queen of Scots depicted in the
white mourning clothes required by the
French royal women

The weeping widow

Mary was raised to become queen of France,
but her future suddenly changed in December 1560

Words by Elizabeth Norton



ary Stuart's future as queen of France was settled when she was just five years old. Raised at the French royal court, she knew that in due course she would marry the Dauphin Francis and rule beside him

when he inherited the throne. Although queen of Scotland in her own right, it was never expected that she would actually rule there. This all changed in 1560, however, with alarming suddenness.

Mary's young husband, Francis II, had always suffered from frail health, unlike his robust wife. At the age of only three he was described as "of pale and grey complexion, less developed than other children of his age". He was particularly affected by problems with his ears, nose and throat and was noted to speak with a nasal intonation, as well as commonly breathing through his mouth. Other observers noted that from childhood he found it impossible to blow his nose, while fluid leaked from his ears on occasion. He suffered frequently from ear infections which, in an age before antibiotics, were difficult to shake off. He was also small, under-developed and young-looking for his age, presenting a sharp comparison to his tall and beautiful wife. Nonetheless, the couple's shared childhood, as well as the fact that she was a year his senior, meant that Mary doted on him.

In spite of his physical limitations, Francis threw himself into the pursuits of kingship. In the autumn of 1560 he announced that he intended to spend the next few weeks hunting in the countryside around Orléans. On Saturday 16 November, however, after a day spent hunting, he returned to the city complaining of earache, a buzzing in his ear and dizziness.

The weather was bitterly cold, but Francis initially hoped to shrug off his illness. The following day he attended vespers in his chapel, but shocked everyone present by fainting. Although this was alarming, Mary's Guise relatives were able to reassure the Spanish ambassador and others that the king was merely suffering from a bad cold caused by fog and the biting weather. Initially attempts to downplay the king's illness were successful, with the Venetian ambassador, for one, recording that both Mary and her mother-in-law, Catherine de' Medici, had caused the rumours by fussing over a king who was no longer even ill. This was, at first, believable, since both women were known to be devoted to the young French king and always anxious over his health and wellbeing.

There was initially considerable hope that the king would recover. The Guises felt sufficiently secure of his health that, on 19 November, they granted the Spanish ambassador an audience with Francis. It was quickly clear that he was unfit for such a meeting and, at the door, the ambassador was turned away by Mary's uncle, the Cardinal

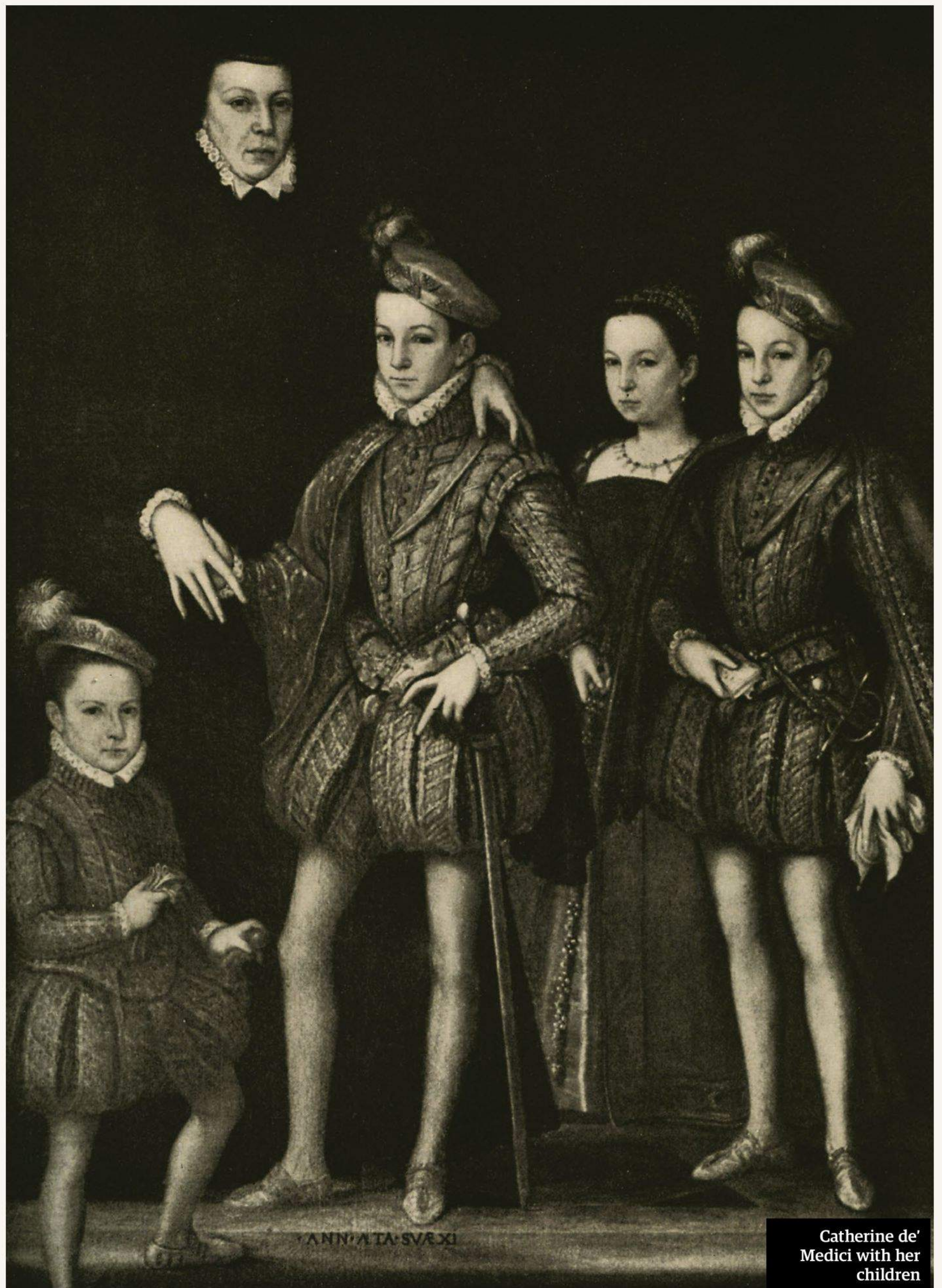
of Lorraine. This was the first obvious sign that something was badly wrong.

As rumours swept the court and country, Francis' health continued to decline. He was soon feverish. For the first time the relationship between his wife and mother, which had hitherto seemed so harmonious, began to fracture, with the two women fighting over who should nurse him in his sickness.

Catherine de' Medici had been intended to be a mother figure to Mary when she first arrived in France. She had certainly supervised her upbringing and kept a close eye on her education as she did with her own children. However, while

nearly everyone at the French court was charmed by the young queen, her future mother-in-law had never warmed to her.

Catherine had waited for over ten years of marriage to bear her first child and was a devoted mother, bitterly mourning the deaths of her children or the loss of her daughters through foreign marriages. Perhaps she resented the fact that her own daughters - princesses of France - were required to give precedence to the Scottish queen after Mary's arrival. Alternatively, it may have been the fact that Mary was simply not her daughter and was, instead, closely related to her Guise rivals. There were also rumours that Mary



Catherine de' Medici with her children

The house of Guise

Mary was devoted to her maternal kin: the most ambitious and influential family in France

Although Mary's status in France rested on the fact that she had inherited her father's Scottish kingdom, it was her mother's family who had the most impact on her life.

Mary's grandfather, Claude, was a younger son of the Duke of Lorraine. He sought his fortune away from his father's independent duchy, marrying the French noblewoman Antoinette de Bourbon. After enjoying considerable military success on behalf of France, he was created Duke of Guise. He was the first non-royal in France to hold the title of duke.

The Guise family was a tight-knit one, supporting the ambitions of each other. Mary, Queen of Scots' arrival in France as the Dauphin's betrothed had been a major stroke of luck for them, with Mary's Guise uncles determined to increase their power through her. Mary was highly attached to her Guise grandmother, aunts and cousins. While she saw her own mother extremely rarely, Mary enjoyed a rich relationship with her family.

Throughout her time in France Mary was advised by her uncles, Francis, Duke of Guise and Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine. She relied implicitly on them and was inextricably linked to the upstart Guises in the eyes of Catherine de' Medici and the wider French court.



Mary's uncle, Francis, Duke of Guise, used his niece's prominence to increase his political power

had offended Catherine by referring to her as only the daughter of a merchant. Simple jealousy of a younger and more attractive queen might also have been a cause.

Regardless of her personal feelings, Catherine had spent a considerable amount of time with Mary during her marriage to Francis, with the two queens often appearing together in the sources. The pair went to daily religious services together during Francis' reign. They also dined together and met with foreign ambassadors in each other's presence. It is unlikely that Mary had any inkling that her mother-in-law disliked her or that she would later perceive her as a threat to her children's security. Indeed, while Francis lived it was in Catherine's interests to remain on friendly terms with his wife. During his final illness, the Italian-born queen's mask began to slip.

Catherine, who was a fierce and protective mother, made it clear that she resented Mary's influence over her son, with the pair clashing



Mary's mother-in-law, Catherine de' Medici, resented Mary and her powerful Guise family

king died the evening of 5 December 1559, aged only 16. His wife and mother were both present to watch him draw his last breath and offer some comfort. For Mary, who at just 18 years

old became a teenaged widow, it was personally devastating. The death was also catastrophic for her politically and with immediate effect. When the time came to leave the room in which her husband had died, Mary was required to cede precedence to Catherine de' Medici. Both were now queen dowagers, and Catherine was the senior one.

Mary had been raised since her early childhood to be Francis's bride and was truly fond of him. She grieved genuinely and passionately for her young husband. The English ambassador, for one, noted that she was "heavy and dolorous" and

appeared worn out from her "long watching with him during his sickness, and painful diligence about him". She swathed herself in the traditional royal mourning colour of white and shut herself away.

"Mary was the person who had loved Francis best, with the Venetian ambassador commenting on her tears"

frequently during his sickness. To Mary's anger, Catherine insisted on being permitted to enter Francis' bedchamber at night, while both would spend the day at his side, seeking to comfort him. While the sickroom was frequently the scene of conflict, Mary and Catherine - as those closest to the king - also worked together. On 3 December both queens, along with Francis' brothers, took part in a procession to the churches in Orléans to pray for the king's health.

With his doctors fearing that an abscess had formed in the infected ear, they contemplated carrying out a trephination by making a hole in Francis' skull in order to relieve the pressure on his brain. As the doctors prepared to carry out this dangerous operation, the fluid leaking from the king's ear suddenly stopped. Relieved, the doctors stopped their work, only for a great eruption of fluid to leak from Francis' ear, leaving him delirious and beyond help.

It was soon noted that the sickness had passed to Francis' brain, probably leading to meningitis. An agonisingly painful death was, by then, inevitable. Unable to do anything more than lie in bed as fluids escaped from his nose and mouth, the boy

Mary was the person who had loved Francis best, with the Venetian ambassador commenting on her incessant tears. "Soon", he considered, "the death of the late king will be forgotten by all except his little wife, who has been widowed, has lost France and has little hope of Scotland". She was certainly no longer the first lady in her adopted homeland. Only one day after Francis' death, Catherine de' Medici demanded that his widow return the queen's jewels to the royal treasury.

Catherine de' Medici, who was a member of the famous Florentine banking dynasty, had not been royal by birth. She had, however, been the niece of the pope at the time of her marriage, something which had recommended her to Henry II's father, Francis I of France, along with the promise of a substantial dowry. She had exerted almost no political influence during her husband's reign, instead being overshadowed by his alluring mistress, Diane de Poitiers. On Henry II's death Catherine was sidelined by Mary's Guise uncles. The Guises, who had sought to rule through Francis and Mary, had badly underestimated Catherine, as had just about everyone at the French court.

Mary hoped to marry her brother-in-law, Charles IX, but Catherine de' Medici refused to countenance the match



Catherine, as the mother of the new king of France, had an additional status and prestige that the childless Mary, Queen of Scots could not hope to attain. Francis' death left Mary without any role in France. She effectively had two options: either remarry or to return to Scotland.

Scotland had been ruled with difficulty by Mary's mother, Marie de Guise, since her accession, but the Scottish regent had recently died. In Mary's absence, too, her kingdom had undergone a Protestant Reformation, with the queen's faith now at odds with those of her people. With the government controlled by the firebrand preacher John Knox and Mary's illegitimate, but Protestant half-brother, James Stewart, there was a real danger that she would not even be permitted to return to her kingdom. If she did, the idea that Mary, as an effective foreigner, could establish any kind of personal rule was almost laughable. She had also been raised to be a royal consort, not a sovereign, and had no great desire to bear rule herself in a distant and unfamiliar country. Unsurprisingly, the 18-year-old queen's thoughts first turned towards a second marriage as she emerged from her widow's seclusion.

Mary's remarriage was one of the most important political questions in Europe, since she would bring her husband Scotland and possibly England as her dowry. There had already been speculation as to where her choice would lie as Francis lay dying, with the kings of Denmark and Sweden or members of the Scottish or Spanish nobility considered plausible choices. Members of the Habsburg royal houses were also in contention.

With the exception of the still-unmarried Elizabeth I of England, Mary was the best match in Europe. Many saw her as a more appealing candidate since, at the time, she enjoyed a reputation for modest purity. This was in contrast to Elizabeth, who was well known for her male favourites. The wife of one of them, Robert Dudley, had recently been found with a broken neck at the foot of a flight of stairs. It was rumoured that he had killed his wife in order to free himself to wed the queen.

Some suitors came to the view that the Scottish queen was more likely to commit than her English counterpart. Elizabeth had herself received countless proposals of marriage following her accession, and had proved adept at delaying her refusal in order to foster an alliance or a trading partnership. The sudden availability of another ruling queen saw many of Elizabeth's suitors courting Mary instead.

One was Erik XIV of Sweden, who had succeeded to the throne only the year before and was still only in his late 20s. By early 1561 he had made his suit known to Mary, while still continuing his courtship of Elizabeth. Although a credible candidate for Mary's hand - particularly given the geographical proximity of Scotland to Scandinavia - she showed no interest in his suit. This was probably fortunate. Within a few years Erik was showing signs of mental instability and

Erik XIV of Sweden courted both Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I at the same time.



was deposed from his throne in 1568. He was later murdered, probably on the orders of his brother.

Another suitor who courted Mary after being refused by Elizabeth was King Frederick II of Denmark. Scotland had a long history with Denmark, and Mary's own son, James VI, would later marry Frederick's daughter, Anne. As a Protestant, Frederick would have appealed to Mary's Scottish lords, while he was reputedly very handsome. However, once again Mary showed no inclination for the match, and negotiations never advanced. As a result of her previous match she had become queen of France. She was looking for a second husband who would increase her status even further.

Mary had a Scottish suitor in the shape of James Hamilton, Earl of Arran, who was around ten years older than her and had also courted Elizabeth. His father had acted as regent during Mary's infancy. He had been instrumental in arranging her

helped to recommend him to Mary, although the possibility of marriage to a mere Italian duke never appealed. The English ambassador Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, for one, believed that she would only consent to marry someone who would enhance her already exalted status.

If that was indeed the case then there were, in reality, very few candidates from which Mary could choose. The obvious choice, which would have allowed her to maintain the comfortable French life she had known, was to marry her ten-year-old brother-in-law, Charles IX. While the pair's relationship through Mary's marriage to Francis would have placed them within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity, papal dispensations were commonly granted in these situations. Charles's age, too, though a disadvantage, would not have been fatal to negotiations, since he was only four years away from being ready for marriage in contemporary's eyes.

"Mary had no shortage of suitors willing to throw their hats into the ring, if she showed even the slightest inclination"

marriage to Francis, a service that had earned him the French dukedom of Châtellerauld as a reward. As a descendant of James II of Scotland, Hamilton was also the next legitimate male heir after Mary and, as a Protestant, was seen by the Scottish lords as an entirely suitable husband for their queen. He had been formally rejected by Elizabeth as a suitor on 8 December 1560, only a few days after Francis's death, and he was therefore well placed to transfer his wooing immediately to Mary. While the match had originally been suggested during Mary's infancy and would be raised again while she was in Scotland, the Scottish queen had no interest.

Mary had no shortage of suitors willing to throw their hats into the ring, if she showed even the slightest inclination to remarry. There was William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, who had been a favourite of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. The Archduke Charles, who was the third son of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I, also tried his hand. His lineage was impeccable but, as a younger son, he had little to offer Mary. He was another rejected suitor of Elizabeth I's, having been rebuffed by the English queen the year before. He was in fact to prove Elizabeth's most persistent suitor, reopening his suit in 1563 and continuing his efforts until 1568. He also continued to show an interest in Mary until she finally did remarry, in spite of the lack of any encouragement on her part.

Alphonso II, Duke of Ferrara, whose first wife, a member of the Medici family, had recently died, was also interested in becoming King of Scots. He was the son of Francis II's great-aunt, Renée of France, to whom Mary was close, while his sister, Anna, was married to Mary's uncle, Francis, Duke of Guise. These family connections



Alphonso II, Duke of Ferrara, was a recent widower. He also tried his hand at wooing the Queen of Scots

Medical terrors

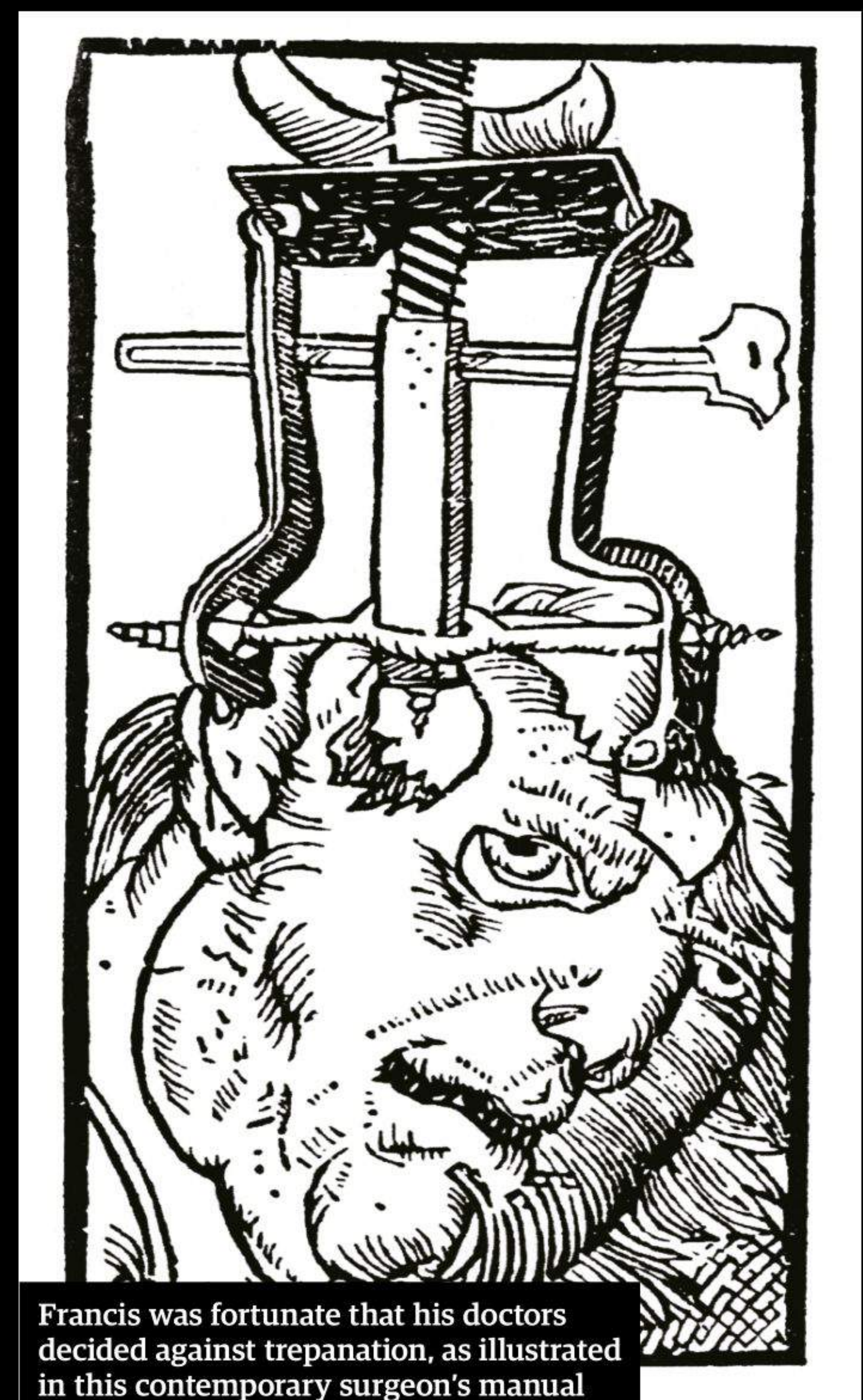
Although Francis had access to the best medical treatment available, 16th century doctors often killed more than they cured

It is striking that Francis died of a mere ear infection – a malady that is both common and treatable in the 21st century. While he could access the best doctors, he also lived in an age before antibiotics and where understanding of the human body was rudimentary.

16th-century medicine was dominated by the ancient Humoral theory. Under this model the body was made up of four humours: blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile. To be healthy it was necessary that the four humours be in balance. Treatment for most diseases focused on this, with bloodletting, for example, carried out where there was a concern that a patient had an excess of blood. Laxatives or burning the skin might also be employed by physicians anxious to restore their patient to balance and health.

In addition to these questionable ideas about the human body, most physicians had no understanding of the importance of hygiene. Infections were easily passed on to patients on the hands of their physicians.

Some 16th-century medicines were effective, but it was hit or miss. Patients suffering from a serious infection, such as Francis, had to hope that their body would be strong enough to recover by itself.



Francis was fortunate that his doctors decided against trepanation, as illustrated in this contemporary surgeon's manual

It was a marriage that Mary would most likely have accepted, given the fact that it would allow her to remain in France and of the status of which she had been raised to aspire. However, while Charles's name would frequently crop up over the next few years as a potential husband for Mary, his mother, who enjoyed her position as regent, would never allow it. She had no wish to raise the Guise family once again towards the French throne, nor to have to give precedence to Mary.

By the end of 1560 Mary was aware that she would have to look elsewhere for a kingly spouse. Sir Nicholas Throckmorton wished "that one of these two queens of the island of Britain were transformed into the shape of a man, to make so happy a marriage as thereby might be an unity of the whole isle and their appendancies". While this was said in jest, there was considerable truth in it. A marriage between the rulers of England and Scotland would have made perfect sense. Save for the fact that, in spite of the rarity of reigning queens, they both happened to be ruled by a woman at the same time.

Mary attended a memorial service to Francis at Orléans on 18 January 1561, which marked the end of her seclusion. She had already, in fact, written to her Scottish lords, informing them of her desire to return to Scotland. She probably did so only to keep her options open. Around the same time she opened negotiations to marry Don Carlos of Spain.

Don Carlos, who was then the only son of Philip II of Spain, was the most prestigious husband that she could possibly seek. He was fated to one day become king of Spain, ruler of the wealthy Netherlands and lord of much of the New World. He was three years younger than Mary and then 15 years old, making him - on paper at least - an eminently suitable match.

The glamour of the match appealed to the Scottish queen. Mary discreetly threw her efforts behind a possible Spanish marriage, with it soon noted that she was spending rather longer with the Spanish ambassador when he visited than was necessary. In late January 1561 Don Juan Manrique arrived in France empowered to open marriage negotiations, and he wasted no time in meeting with Mary in the presence of her uncles, the Duke of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorraine.

While Mary was in favour of a Spanish match, her plans came unstuck in the face of her disintegrating relationship with Catherine de' Medici. While the French-resident King of Navarre had seemed a likely candidate for regent, Catherine used her considerable intelligence and political skill to take control of France herself. She ruled through her son, Charles IX, until he reached his majority. Even then, she was able to remain the supreme power in France until her death. She proved a remarkably capable ruler. One of Catherine's first acts was to reduce the power of the Guise family.

Catherine de' Medici was an expert dissembler, with Mary writing to her Scottish lords in January to inform them that her mother-in-law had been a great consolation to her in her sorrow. While



James Hamilton, Earl of Arran, had Scottish royal blood and was a leading Protestant candidate for her hand

on the face of it relations between Catherine and Mary were friendly even after Francis's death, in reality the French regent was working to frustrate the Spanish marriage. Catherine wrote regularly to her daughter, Elisabeth, who was Don Carlos' stepmother, warning her to be cautious of the Queen of Scots (who was referred to under the codename 'the gentlewoman') and to advise her on how to damage the negotiations in Spain.

For her own part, Catherine also offered the possibility of a French bride to Don Carlos - her younger daughter, Margaret. She had good reason to fear the match, since it could offer no advantage to her own children. If Mary had become queen of Spain she would have supplanted Catherine's own daughter, who was the wife of Philip II of Spain. At the same time, the Guise family would have risen once again to political prominence as a potential power behind the Spanish throne.

Faced with French opposition and English hostility, Philip of Spain had little desire to attach his son to Mary, particularly since he believed that she could only return to her kingdom by force. Negotiations fizzled out in the spring of 1561.

Mary undoubtedly had a lucky escape in the failure of the match. Although a politically glorious marriage, it would have been a personal disaster.

Carlos was as physically weak as Mary's first husband, while he was also mentally unstable. Thanks to generations of his Habsburg family's inbreeding, he had only half as many great-grandparents as would be expected and only six - out of a possible 16 - great-great-grandparents, making him a very poor specimen. He later died aged only 23, having been imprisoned by his own father who declared him to be insane.

Nonetheless, in 1561 the loss of the match left Mary's future even more uncertain. Catherine's hostility also became more apparent as the elder queen sought to push her rival away from the centre of power. In March Mary left the French court to stay at various residences owned by her Guise family, later claiming that this was due to Catherine's "rigorous and vengeful dealing".

There was no question that Mary would retain her status as a queen of France. She was well-received wherever she went, as well as ceremonially welcomed back to Paris by the new king and his mother when she finally returned to court. However, for Mary, the death of Francis and her failure to find a new, equally high-status husband marked a turning point in her life. By the middle of 1561 it was becoming clear that her future would lie not in France, but in Scotland.



Mary argues with John Knox over her hopes to marry Don Carlos

White widows

Mary, like all French royal widows, was expected to don white to signify her grief

Mary, like all French royal widows, was expected to mourn her husband and enter seclusion for a period. Surprisingly, members of the French royal family marked their grief by wearing white.

White mourning, or *deuil blanc* as it was referred to in France, was a long-established custom dating back to the medieval period. While it is now rare for white to be associated with sorrow, in the 16th century and earlier it was considered to represent deepest mourning. As such, French royal widows would shut themselves away and dress only in white for the immediate period after their husband's death.

Such seclusion was primarily intended to show respect for the deceased, but it also had a more practical purpose. In the 16th century pregnancy was difficult to diagnose early, and it was therefore imperative that a widowed queen was kept under observation for a few weeks. France had, in fact, briefly had a posthumous king, with the kingdom without a monarch for five months in 1316 while it waited for a widowed queen to give birth. More recently, Mary's own great-aunt, Mary Tudor, who was the widow of Louis XII, was watched anxiously for signs of pregnancy since her husband had no son.

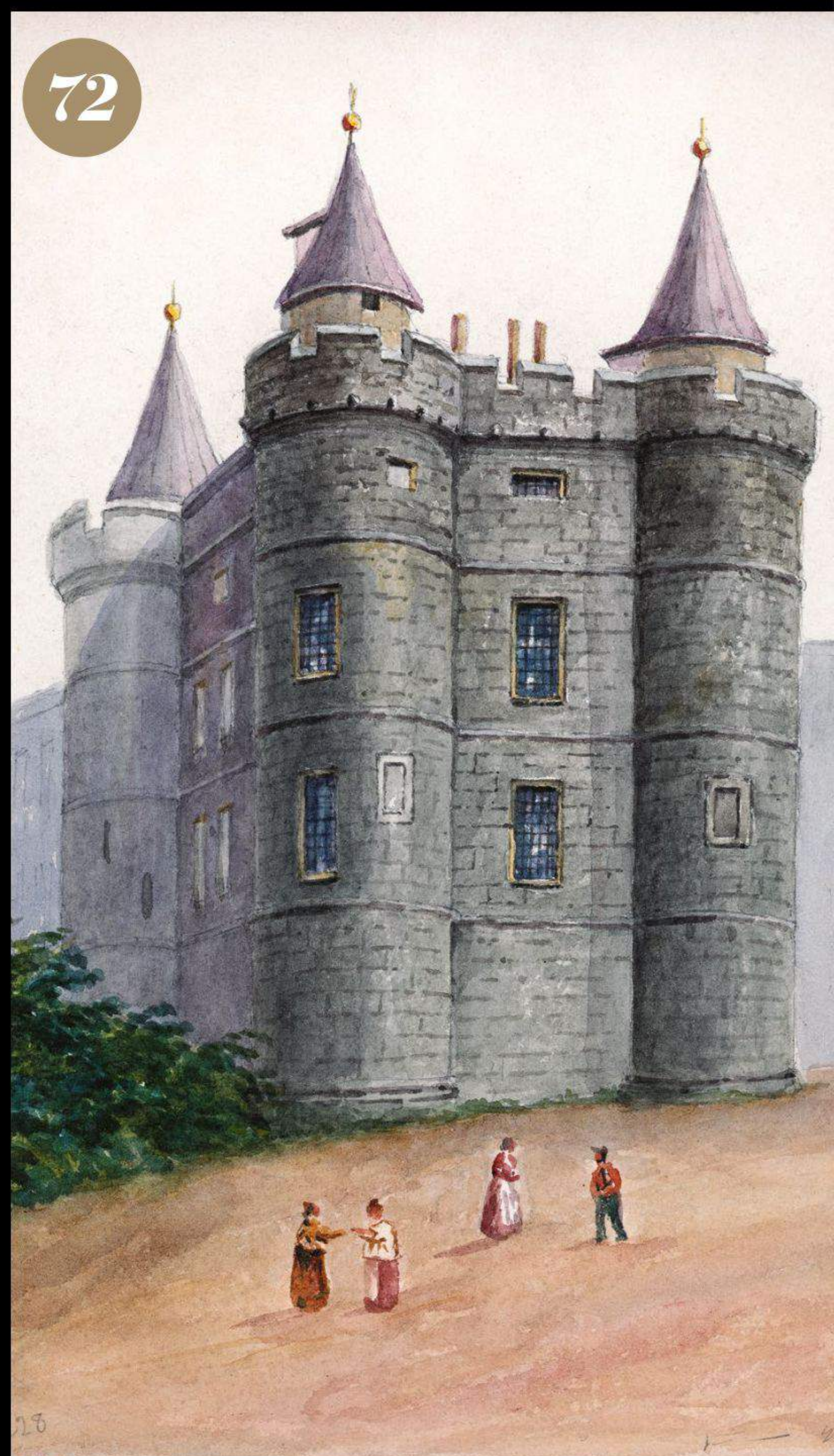


Here, Francis I's sister, Margaret of Navarre, is depicted in white mourning following the death of her first husband in 1525

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Return to Scotland

54 Return of the queen

Widowed and bereft, a young Mary was forced to return to her realm as a stranger, but she was determined to take control of her life

62 A doomed infatuation

While her first marriage had been a political one arranged in childhood, Mary chose her second husband for herself

68 The Rizzio Rebellion

On 9 March 1566 a simple evening supper party became the most terrifying night of Mary's life

72 Who killed Henry Darnley?

The murder of Mary's husband in 1567 poses one of the biggest whodunits in British history

80 Bothwell the bigamist

Contemporaries thought that Mary's choice of second husband was damaging, but her third marriage was politically catastrophic

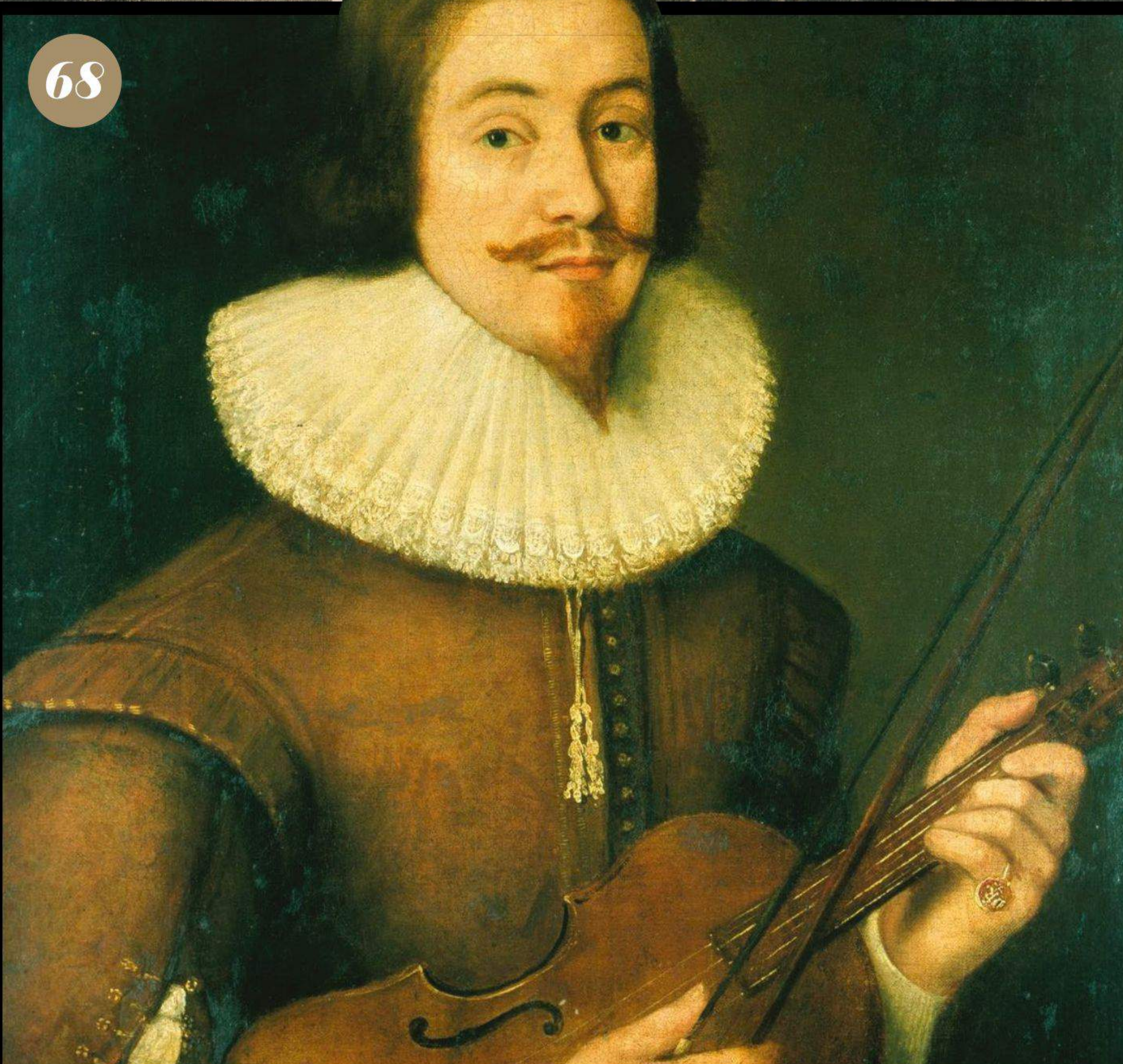
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Mary, Queen of Scots bids
farewell to France

Return of the queen

Widowed and bereft, a young Mary was forced to return to her realm
as a stranger, but she was determined to take control of her life

Words by Jessica Leggett



Mary's parents, King James V and Queen Marie de Guise



Mary, Queen of Scots, was always destined to face a tumultuous reign in Scotland. Her decision to return after 13 years away was one of the most dangerous and daring of her life at a time when her realm was emerging

from a period of religious conflict. With the state of religion concluded without her consent, Mary faced an uphill battle to not only gain the acceptance of her people, but also to regain the power that had been taken during her absence.

As the Reformation took 16th-century Europe by storm, Scotland could not avoid being swept up in the upheaval. When Protestant works started appearing in Scotland and leaving an impression on those who read them, Mary's father, King James V, attempted to ban them. However, he also used the situation to his advantage and would act interested in these Protestant ideas to scare the pope into giving in tax concessions. Interest in Protestantism among the Scottish increased following the Rough Wooing, with many Protestant texts crossing the border from England. With a young Queen Mary sent to be raised in France, her French mother, Marie de Guise, was left to rule as regent. Although she was a fiercely Catholic woman, Protestants were not as widely persecuted compared to other countries, although many decided to flee abroad.

Having said that, persecution still occurred in Scotland. Cardinal David Beaton, the archbishop of St Andrews and Lord Chancellor, began an inquisition-style regime against Protestants. The situation came to a head when Beaton had Protestant preacher George Wishart executed in 1546, turning the reformer into a martyr for the Protestant cause.

Wishart had many sympathisers and in retaliation, they assassinated Beaton and seized St Andrews Castle. They remained at the castle hoping in vain that Protestant England would dispatch to support them. After 18 months, French reinforcements arrived and bombarded the castle, successfully taking it back. Many of the rebels were imprisoned in France or forced to work on the galleys, including a man named John Knox.

Knox was one of the leading figures of the Scottish Reformation. He lived in exile in England after the French released him in 1549, working for the Church of England during the short reign of King Edward VI. After the monarch's death, his Catholic sister, Queen Mary I, ascended the throne and Knox escaped to Geneva in Switzerland and Frankfurt, spending the 1550s in exile.

With Mary I on the English throne, many Protestants in Scotland believed that their cause had been lost. However, with the accession of Mary's Protestant sister, Queen Elizabeth I, in 1558, there was renewed hope for their cause once again. Knox, plus the many others who had fled abroad, started arriving on the Scottish shores ready to enact religious change.

Although only about ten per cent of the population was Protestant at this point, this did include some of the most influential people in Scotland, such as Queen Mary's half-brother, James Stewart. He was the leader of the Lords of the Congregation, a group of anti-French Protestant nobles that emerged in 1557 and who opposed the queen's marriage to Dauphin Francis of France, believing that it would spell the end of Scotland's fierce independence.

With Knox's return to Scotland, religious tensions reached boiling point as Marie de Guise declared him an outlaw. It was unsurprising that she saw him as a threat, as Knox has been lobbying for the Protestant cause while in exile, reaching out to the nobles who had been left frustrated by French involvement in Scotland.

"With Knox's return to Scotland, religious tensions reached boiling point as Marie de Guise declared him an outlaw"

The backlash against female rule

Even in exile, Knox refused to be silent about his opinions

Horried with the succession of female sovereigns including Mary, Queen of Scots, her regent mother Marie de Guise and Queen Mary I of England, Knox took pen to paper and wrote his scathing critique of women's right to rule, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*.

In Knox's opinion, the rule of women went against the bible and the laws of nature. To make matters worse, the above three queens were Catholic women and as a Protestant reformer, it gave Knox a platform to lambast female power. However, his views were not limited to religion and he made his belief clear that women were weak, cruel, immoral and inferior to men.

Coinciding with his exile from England after Queen Mary's accession, Knox wrote his book in 1558, the year before the Scottish Reformation crisis. Mary also died in 1558 and was succeeded by Queen Elizabeth I, a Protestant. When Knox wanted to return to Scotland to lead the Reformation, he hoped to travel through England. However, Elizabeth had been left deeply offended by Knox's work and refused to allow him entry, even after he wrote a series of apologetic letters.

THE
FIRST BLAST
OF THE
TRUMPET
AGAINST THE
Monstrous Regimen of Women.

By Mr. JOHN KNOX, Minister of the Gospel at
EDINBURGH.

To which is added,
The Contents of the SECOND BLAST,

AND

A LETTER from John Knox to the People of
The First Blast of the Trumpet is
one of Knox's most famous works

Delivering a passionate and patriotic sermon to his followers, Knox decried Catholic idolatry and ignited a rebellious spirit that quickly spiralled into rioting. Iconoclasm spread throughout the country as cathedrals were attacked and looted, left to decay in the aftermath.

Marie de Guise sought French support in tackling the Protestant Lords while they, in turn, reached out to Queen Elizabeth in England. By January 1560, it looked like Mary and the French had almost overpowered the Protestants until an English fleet arrived to support them - now foreign troops were intervening in both sides of the conflict.

A full-scale war between the two sides was luckily avoided when Marie de Guise died in June 1560. With Mary still in France, there was no one to stop the Protestants from seizing power and a month after the regent's death, the Treaty of Edinburgh was signed. The accord, with the agreement of both France and England, led to the withdrawal of foreign troops and left Scotland to deal with its own matters.

In August, the Scottish Reformation Parliament of 1560 confirmed Protestantism as the faith of the country and rejected the authority of the Papacy and the Catholic Church through a series of acts including the Papal Jurisdiction Act. Mary refused to ratify these but there was nothing she could do to stop the Parliament from proceeding while she was abroad in France. Consequently, the Lords pushed ahead and the Scottish Reformation was quick and decisive, unlike the one that occurred in England.

With a new state religion, the doctrines and governance of the Church of Scotland needed to be changed. Heading up a committee of clergymen, Knox laid out his foundations for the Church based on Calvinism, which he had been exposed to during his time in Geneva.

This led to the creation of the Scots Confession, the new confession of faith and the First Book of Discipline, which outlined the organisation of the Church. While the former was approved by Parliament, it rejected the latter over concerns regarding property and finance. Further plans to settle the matter were halted upon news of Mary's impending return to her homeland.

Across the channel, the world of Mary, Queen of Scots, had completely changed. Sent to France by her mother when she was just five years old for her own safety, she had turned into more of French queen than a Scottish one - the majority of her household was French, her first language and accent were French, and her tastes were French.

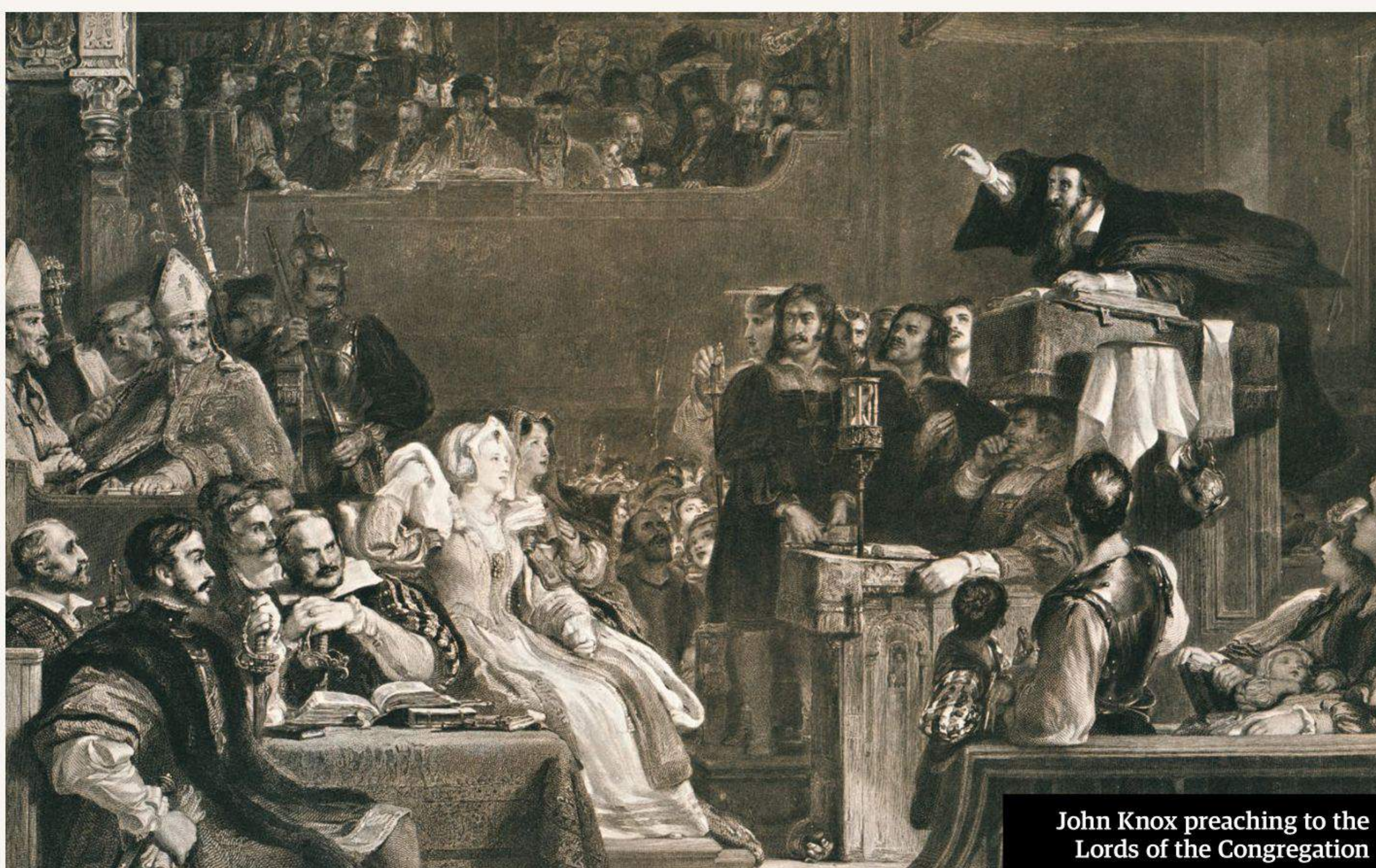
After all of the effort that was made during Mary's infancy to ensure she was raised in France and a bride-in-waiting for the heir to the French throne, Dauphin Francis, their

marriage was tragically brief. The young couple married in 1558 and the following year, Francis succeeded his father as king in 1559. However, he died in December 1560 when Mary was just 18 years old and only six months after the death of her beloved mother.

Their deaths had placed Mary in an extremely difficult situation. With Francis's death, she had lost her position as queen consort of France and was



A portrait of Mary from around 1558 to 1560, during her marriage to Francis



John Knox preaching to the Lords of the Congregation



Mary's marriage was cut short with the death of her husband, King Francis II

“She had lost her position as queen consort of France and was now overshadowed by her formidable mother-in-law”

now overshadowed by her formidable mother-in-law, Catherine de' Medici, who was acting as regent for her ten-year-old son, King Charles IX. On top of this, Catherine had no need for Mary to stay in France and no longer wanted her there, hoping to ship her back to Scotland as soon as possible.

As a result of her mother's death, Mary was now faced with the power vacuum that had emerged in Scotland in her absence and the religious changes caused by the Scottish Reformation. She was a devoted Catholic but returning to her Protestant realm to assume control meant that she would be entering the belly of the beast and potentially risking her life.

Meanwhile, the Scottish Parliament was not eager for the Catholic queen to return, viewing her as a threat to their achievements. Mary was stuck between a rock and a hard place, as neither her native country nor her adopted one wanted her. It seemed that whatever decision she made, it would be the wrong one.

Mary's maternal uncles, members of the powerful Guise family, wanted to arrange another marriage for the queen as quickly as possible to maintain their power in France. Despite the machinations of her uncles, Mary herself had no interest in finding a second husband. After the official mourning period for Francis had ended, Mary retreated from court and began to rearrange her household, choosing advisors who knew Scotland well and could educate her on her realm.

In spring 1561, Mary travelled to Lorraine to inform her Guise relatives that she had decided to go home to Scotland and fill the void that her absence had left. Her family, as well as her friends, were shocked at her decision and believed that as a Catholic woman, she would never be safe in Scotland - but Mary knew it was her duty to go and was undeterred by their fears.

To prepare for her journey back home, Mary met with both Catholic and Protestant emissaries from Scotland. The Catholic representative, John Leslie, bishop of Ross, urged his queen to return and lead a civil war to rid their country of the scourge of Protestantism that had swept Scotland, but Mary roundly refused this request.

As for the Protestant representative, it was Mary's half-brother, James. On his way to meet her in France, James went through England and secretly met with William Cecil, Elizabeth's chief advisor

Mary knew that once she stepped onto Scotland's shores, she could not look back



and secretary of state. Together, they agreed that it was crucial to get Mary away from her Catholic Guise relatives, and particularly her influential uncles. To this end, James promised Mary that she could continue to attend Mass in her own Royal Chapel if she respected the Protestant Settlement and returned to rule Scotland in person. The negotiations between the pair took five days before they reached their agreement, which ensured that Mary would accept the status quo of Protestantism in her country.

It is surprising that James supported his half-sister, considering he likely coveted the crown himself, which had been denied to him on account of his illegitimacy. Still, James knew that he lacked support for his claim despite his position as head of the Lords of the Congregation, as many powerful nobles still respected Mary's position on the throne - while James would have to bypass other legitimate heirs to take the crown.

James could not hope for reinforcements from across the border either as although Elizabeth was a Protestant, she did not want to support a precedent of deposing anointed queens lest it backfire and threaten her position. He may have been celebrated for helping to lead the charge against Marie de Guise, but this did not mean that James deserved the crown for himself.

Mary set sail from Calais on 14 August 1561, accompanied by the 'Four Marys' - four girls who had been her companions since childhood and who were now her ladies-in-waiting. They journeyed on a great white galley, followed by another galley that was carrying the rest of the royal servants, as well as merchant ships that were ferrying Mary's various belongings including furniture, paintings, clothing and horses. As she crossed the waters, the young queen had no idea what her fate would be and as the French coast started to disappear, the weight of her decision hit her. Dissolving into floods of tears, Mary sadly said, "Adieu, France. It's all over now. Adieu, France. I think I'll never see your shores again."

After five days at sea, Mary arrived in Leith, Edinburgh to canon fire announcing her return. Her journey had gone quicker than expected and so the queen was forced to wait in a local merchant's house until James and the other nobleman could get there to collect her. Once they arrived, Mary was escorted to Holyrood Palace where she moved into the palace's Queen's Apartments.

Mary made her official entry into Edinburgh on 2 September and despite fears about how she would be received, the Scottish people gave her an enthusiastic welcome, happy to see that their queen had grown into a beautiful and graceful woman. She was given the keys to the city and a book of Psalms, with bonfires, music and celebrations going on into the night.

However, not everybody was happy with Mary's return to Scotland. Fearing that she would threaten the state of religion, a protest erupted when it was discovered that she had attended Mass in her Royal Chapel, although the queen quickly issued an

assurance that she had no intention of changing the country's religion.

While this appeased most people, there was one person in particular who refused to accept Mary's Catholicism - Knox. He feared that with the queen attending Mass it would not only inspire others to do so, but that it would also offend God. Knox believed that Scotland had lost God's protection thanks to Mary and that she was plunging her country into danger.

Two days after her entry into Edinburgh, Mary summoned Knox after she heard of public accusations that he had made against her. Knox finally arrived after Mary requested his presence five times, and the queen claimed that he had tried to incite an armed rebellion against her. In response, Knox coldly compared Mary to Nero, the tyrannical Roman emperor, and reminded her that even monarchs could be resisted.

This was not to be the only time that Mary and Knox would meet and come into conflict over her choice of religion. There was one particular incident where Knox, armed with a mob, attempted to intervene with the queen's Mass at Holyrood, only to be stopped by James. In total, Mary and Knox met four times during her reign as she attempted to placate him, with one encounter causing the queen



The Earl of Moray

"Despite fears about how she would be received, the Scottish people gave her an enthusiastic welcome"

A step too far

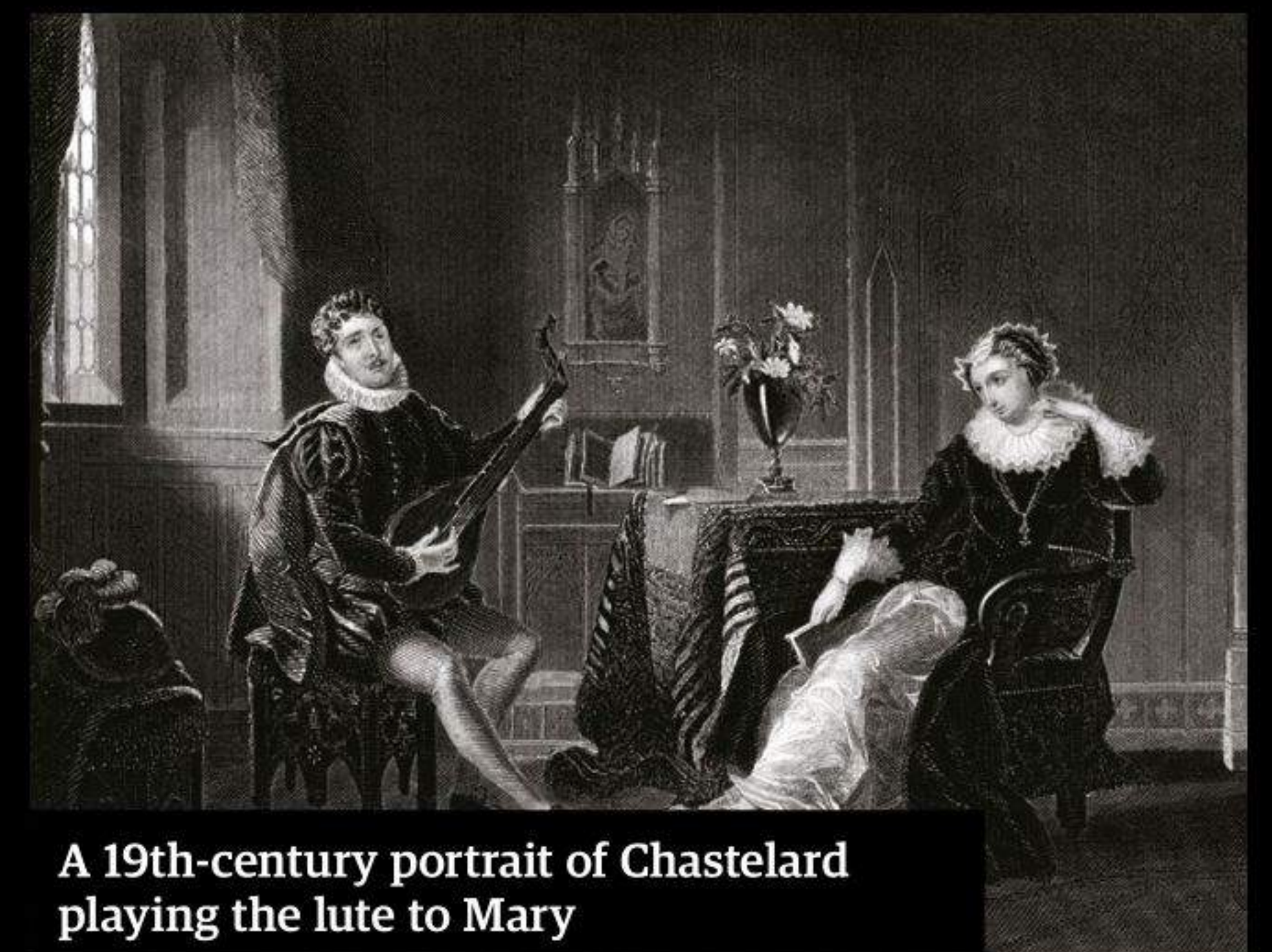
Was Mary subject to an insane passion or a dastardly plot?

Mary first met the poet Pierre de Bocosel de Chastelard, who was known for his writings on courtly love, while at the French court. It was said that the poet quickly fell in love with the beautiful queen, who supposedly encouraged his feelings by striking up a flirtatious friendship.

After Mary left France for Scotland, Chastelard was one of the courtiers to accompany her. He returned to France afterwards and reportedly continued to send poems to his queen, and later came back to the Scottish court for the winter in 1562.

However, a seemingly innocent flirtation caused a major scandal when an infatuated Chastelard was caught hiding under Mary's bed at Holyrood Palace by her maids of honour. The queen pardoned Chastelard but just a few days later, he violated her privacy again, apparently while she was undressing. Frightened, Mary's screams alerted her brother James, who had Chastelard arrested.

The poet was executed the next day but an anxious Mary insisted on having her lady-in-waiting sleep at the foot of her bed. While Chastelard's actions were blamed on unrequited love, there were rumours that he was either an English spy or part of a Protestant plot to discredit the queen and ruin her reputation.



A 19th-century portrait of Chastelard playing the lute to Mary

“Regardless of the opposition she faced from Knox, Mary continued to pursue her duties as queen”

to burst into tears. Regardless of the opposition she faced from Knox, Mary continued to pursue her duties as queen. She appointed James as her chief advisor and regularly attended Privy Council meetings, retaining the Protestant noblemen who had led the Reformation and appointing only four Catholic men to the Council, which was made up of a total of 16 people - a sure sign of her leniency.

While adjusting to her new life, the queen had not forgotten her love for France. It was noted that Mary kept her court in the French style and she remained interested in French affairs, continuing to manage the estates that she had been as part of her dowry settlement. Even though the queen had returned to Protestant Scotland, many of her opponents would argue that she left her heart in Catholic France.

However, the queen kept to her word and did not interfere with the state of religion even though she consciously struggled and refused to ratify it. Her decision to remain passive in the matter disappointed the Catholics of her realm, who had hoped that her return would lead to a counter-reformation. Despite this, Mary understood that she had few true allies in Scotland - she was politically isolated and she lacked the forces to support her. Any attempt to go against the powerful Protestant Lords was tantamount to sparking a civil war, something that Mary had no interest in starting.

The queen was also distracted by the constant fighting between her nobles as she attempted to maintain calm and order. Deciding to restore the Scottish court to its former glory, Mary organised masques and entertainment, and she used the occasions to try and reconcile her nobles. Nonetheless, Knox took issue with her activities once again and denounced her for being frivolous and immoral, believing that the queen would eventually turn Holyrood into a brothel.

But for Mary, the masques were not just about prestige and mediating - they were about her cousin, Elizabeth. Incorporating themes of amity and virginity, they served as just one of the many ways in which Mary attempted to endear herself to Elizabeth, hoping to be named as her successor to the English throne.

The queen had made no secret of her desire to become Elizabeth's heir, writing friendly letters to her cousin and sending gifts across the border. It is for this reason that her reluctance to intervene in Scotland's state of religion speaks volumes, because her focus on the English crown - which



Return of the queen

was Protestant - overruled her need to restore Catholicism in her realm.

Mary had a strong claim to the English throne and Elizabeth knew it. To press her claim, Mary sent her advisor and ambassador, William Maitland of Lethington, to England to speak with her English cousin. While Elizabeth still refused to accept Mary, the pair planned to meet for the very first time in person in August 1562, and it looked like some progress was being made.

Unfortunately for Mary, the proposed meeting was postponed by Elizabeth because of the civil war consuming France. Instead, Mary decided to go on a summer progress to the northeast of Scotland, travelling from Stirling to Inverness with several stops along the way. During her journey, Mary was expected to call upon the Earl of Huntly, one of the most powerful Catholic lords in the country. However, Mary adamantly refused to do so, furious because the Earl had defiantly opposed her decision to meet Elizabeth.

Huntly, seething in discontent, was a ticking time bomb. Once a supporter of Mary's mother, Marie de Guise, he had been appointed as Lord Chancellor of Scotland after the murder of Cardinal Beaton. He later changed his allegiance to the Lords of the Congregation, only to anger them with his anti-Protestant beliefs, leaving himself ostracised from the heart of power.

The queen never forgot Huntly's disloyalty towards her mother and in September 1561, she gave James the earldom of Moray, which had belonged to Huntly. Evidently enraged by this decision, Huntly ordered for the gates of Inverness Castle to remain closed as Mary approached the end of her progress, with the captain of the castle refusing her entry.

Incensed with Huntly's defiance and encouraged by her new Earl of Moray, Mary returned to the castle the next day with her forces and promptly captured it, executing the captain. Huntly was not present in Inverness and Mary outlawed him when he refused to come forward. He was eventually captured alongside two of his sons, one of whom was executed, though Huntly himself died from a stroke before the queen could dispense her justice.

Though Mary had successfully dealt with Huntly, it also served as a stark reminder that her position on the throne was far from stable, particularly as she remained unmarried and childless. The queen needed to secure the succession of her dynasty and the question of who she would marry was on everybody's lips - but, as Mary would discover, choosing the right husband was far from easy.

To many of her contemporaries, Mary's decision to return to Scotland was not only risky, but reckless. The cards were stacked against her as a Catholic, female ruler in a man's world, but Mary's choice reflected her courageous nature and her determination to seize what was hers. Spurred on by the loss she felt from the deaths of her husband and her mother, the queen bravely returned to guide a fractured realm, unaware of the tragic fate that awaited her.



A full-length portrait of a young man, identified as Henry Stuart, Duke of Darnley. He is standing, facing forward, with a pale complexion and reddish-gold hair. He wears a dark blue or black robe over a white, buttoned-up tunic. A white lace ruff collar is visible. In the upper right corner, there is a decorative plaque with Latin text. The background is dark and indistinct.

Even as a boy, Darnley was striking to look at, with a pale complexion and reddish gold hair

HENRICVS STVART, EIVS NO
MINIS PRIMVS DEI GRATIA
SCOTORV REX, INTERFECTVS
7. DIE MESIS FEBRVARII AN.
DNI. 1567. CŪ SORS ANISVN.
TVLIT ESSE VIGILI.

A doomed infatuation

While her first marriage had been a political one, arranged in childhood, Mary chose her second husband for herself

Words by Elizabeth Norton



he question of Mary's marriage was of major importance in Scotland, since it would provide the kingdom with a king.

Unlike her cousin in England, who was determined that there

would be 'one mistress and no master', Mary always intended to wed and settle the Scottish succession. In her choice, she was eventually driven both by infatuation and by her desire to succeed to the English throne. Yet, her choice was a personal and political disaster.

In January 1565 Elizabeth I surprisingly granted permission for her 19-year-old kinsman, Henry, Lord Darnley, to travel to Scotland. Mary was then still in negotiation with Elizabeth about the possibility of marrying the English queen's favourite - Robert Dudley. He had recently been created Earl of Leicester in order to make him a better match for a ruling queen. Mary, who had been first insulted about the possibility of marrying Elizabeth's lowborn castoff, was still decidedly lukewarm. She allowed negotiations to continue in the hope that she could induce Elizabeth to name her as her heir.

The decision of Elizabeth to allow Darnley to travel to Scotland is a perplexing one. Darnley, as the eldest surviving son of Matthew Stuart, Earl of Lennox and his wife, Margaret Douglas, had a claim to both the Scottish and English thrones. His claim to the English throne was altogether more significant since he was the leading male descendant of Henry VII. Darnley's mother, Margaret Douglas, was the daughter of Mary's own grandmother, Margaret Tudor, making the pair half-cousins. She was the only grandchild of Henry VII to produce sons who lived to adulthood, ensuring that she was particularly significant in the much depleted Tudor family tree.

A union between the Scottish and English branches of Margaret Tudor's family could only make their claim to the English crown stronger, as both Mary and Elizabeth knew. Darnley's claims were also widely recognised. The Spanish ambassador to England - Bishop de Quadra - for one, informed his master that, if Elizabeth were to die, Darnley was her most likely successor. The English Catholics, in particular, supported his claims, thanks to the esteem in which his mother was held. Darnley's sex and English birth weighed heavily in his favour, even if his hereditary claims were subject to those of Mary - the daughter of his mother's half-brother.

Darnley and Mary had, in fact, met twice before. He had attended Francis II's coronation in 1559,

as well as returning to pay Mary a visit in Orléans after she had been widowed. This was officially a visit of consolation, on behalf of Mary's aunt, Margaret Douglas, but it is clear that Margaret hoped to bring her son to the attention of her newly widowed and available niece. Darnley's mother, who doted on her two surviving sons, was highly ambitious for them. She was also well aware of how handsome Darnley was, with Margaret Douglas commissioning at least one portrait of her eldest son on linen so that it could be easily rolled for travelling. On this occasion, while she was grieving for Francis, Mary appears to have shown her young cousin little interest. Yet, he must have made an impression.

In an era where all high-status men and women tended to be described as attractive, Darnley really

"For dynastic reasons, Darnley had been named as a possible husband for Mary, Queen of Scots, since at least 1562"

was handsome. His surviving portraits show a fair-haired young man, dashing and poised, and this is how he was described by those who knew him. He had even, well-shaped features and beautiful, striking eyes. Darnley was also physically magnificent, resembling a young Henry VIII in his striking height and slender body. He was, as Elizabeth I once pointed out to the Scottish ambassador, 'yonder long lad', something that would have been calculated to please Mary. He was one of the few men that she knew who were taller than her. The worst that could be said of his appearance was that he was still 'beardless and lady-faced', but he was still only a teenager when he arrived in Scotland and would presumably grow into a more manly specimen.

Darnley was also given a princely education. He was an expert dancer, could play the lute and sing well. He loved hunting and hawking and was an excellent rider, as well as being athletic and strong. He

knew Latin, and could also speak English, Scots and French, although he does not appear to have been a particularly stellar student.

He was also doted on by his mother, who had lost many children in infancy. There were ten years between Darnley and his only surviving sibling, Charles, and Margaret Douglas spoilt her eldest, with Darnley growing into a self-centred and somewhat light-weight young man. His character failings were, initially, well-hidden beneath his handsome veneer, although Mary's uncle, the Cardinal of Lorraine, referred to him as 'a nice young cockerel'.

For dynastic reasons, Darnley had been named as a possible husband for Mary, Queen of Scots, since at least February 1562 and Elizabeth's decision to permit him to travel to Scotland is



Having lost most of her children in infancy, Margaret Douglas was a protective mother to her two surviving sons

Lennox ambition

Darnley was pushed into Mary's view by his ambitious parents, who hoped for a crown for their son

Darnley's father, Matthew Stuart, Earl of Lennox, endured a troubled childhood in Scotland following the murder of his father. By the early 1530s he had fled to France, becoming a favoured courtier. Following James V's unexpected death, he was soon sent back to Scotland in the role of French ambassador. Claiming to be heir to the Scottish crown, he caused problems for the queen dowager, Marie de Guise, whom he hoped to marry. By 1544 he had defected to the English, marrying Henry VIII's niece, Margaret Douglas.

As an exile in England, with his Scottish lands forfeited, Lennox maintained his ambitions. He raised his son, Darnley, as a potential king of both England and Scotland and promoted his marriage to Mary, Queen of Scots. He later reached the pinnacle of his career as regent to his infant grandson, James VI of Scotland.

Even with Lennox's assassination in 1571, his family's ambition was not diminished. Arbella, the daughter of Lennox's younger son Charles, made a bid for the English crown after Elizabeth I's death. She would later die in the Tower of London after being imprisoned by her cousin, James VI.



Darnley's family long had designs on the English throne. His niece, Arbella Stuart, was promoted as a successor to Elizabeth I



surprising. At first glance, it seems naïve, although it is possible that the English queen made a calculated move, intending to divert Mary from her marriage negotiations with foreign powers by tacitly offering her the only English suitor that she would accept. Darnley certainly did not wait for Elizabeth to change her mind, leaving London on 3 February 1565.

Lord Darnley was formally presented to Mary in Fife on 17 February 1565. He made an immediate impression, with the queen declaring that 'he was the lustiest and best proportioned long man that she had seen'. At first, while she seems to have enjoyed his company, there was little evidence that Mary had fallen in love.

This changed in April 1565 when Darnley fell ill with a cold, which turned in to measles. Mary,

perhaps at first to show sympathy for her visitor, took to visiting him, but she was soon noted to be going with growing frequency. She was a few years older than her young cousin and seems to have mothered him, acting as his nurse as he convalesced. Soon, she was in his room both night and day, often staying past midnight and, as she cared for him, she fell passionately in love.

Although Mary had always considered marriage to be primarily a dynastic arrangement, designed to increase her status and international standing, she could not resist Darnley's physical charms. After his recovery, she remained as infatuated as ever, with the couple openly exchanging love tokens at court. Mary, who had hitherto proved a composed and careful monarch in Scotland, seemed alarmingly changed. There were soon rumours that Darnley

had bewitched her. While it was undoubtedly a love match on the queen's part, the match also had its political advantages. United, Mary and Darnley were far and away the most likely to succeed to Elizabeth's throne.

On 15 May 1565 Mary created Darnley knight of Tarbolton, Lord Ardmanoch and Earl of Ross, while he in turn swore his allegiance to her. This sudden and dramatic increase in Darnley's status effectively announced the couple's engagement. Elizabeth professed herself furious, demanding that Darnley - an English subject - return at once. While Darnley and his father were out of her reach in Scotland, she sent Darnley's mother to the Tower and confiscated the family's English lands. She also sent Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, who had always got on so well with Mary in France, north to dissuade her from the marriage. The English queen would never recognise Darnley as king of Scotland.

Mary and Darnley ignored Elizabeth's anger. On 22 July the Scottish queen created her fiancé Duke of Albany, while the banns of marriage were called. Darnley's future status was also considered and, on 28 July, a proclamation confirmed that he would become king of Scots, with equal status to his wife. Coins were also minted, in the names of King Henry and Queen Mary, with Darnley - as the male partner - given precedence over Mary.

The couple married the next morning in a Catholic ceremony in Mary's private chapel at Holyrood Palace. For the ceremony, as an indication of her widowed status, Mary wore black, with a wide mourning hood covering her hair. She entered the chapel accompanied both by Darnley's father and the Earl of Argyll, waiting patiently for the bridegroom to arrive.

Darnley had been raised as a Catholic, but was well-known to be ambivalent about religion. In England he had professed himself to be a member of the Church of England and while in Scotland was happy to attend Protestant sermons and services. As a demonstration of this, he left the chapel after the marriage ceremony, with only Mary staying for the Catholic mass that followed. Once the religious service was done, Mary changed out of her black dress. The day was spent in feasting and dancing, before the couple retired to bed together. In spite of her widowhood, the young Scottish queen was most likely still a virgin on her wedding night to Darnley.

On 30 July 1565, Darnley was publicly proclaimed as King Henry of Scotland, although he was a far from popular monarch. Of the crowd that assembled to hear his proclamation at Mercat Cross, only his father - the Earl of Lennox - cried out 'God save His Grace'. More days of feasting and celebrations at court followed, but the rejoicing was muted for everyone except the couple themselves.

Darnley and his younger brother, Charles were, for much of their lives, the only living male descendants of Henry VII





James Stewart, Earl of Moray, rebelled against his half-sister after disagreeing with her marriage to Darnley

Mary's love for Darnley had, in the eyes of many at her court and in the wider world, caused her to act hastily. She was, wrote the English, Thomas Randolph, so blinded by love that she had abandoned herself, with 'all care of common wealth set apart, to the utter contempt of her best subjects'.

Becoming a king had always been Darnley's greatest ambition. He had been raised to expect this by his indulgent parents and had already shown himself proud and haughty in Scotland. When informed that he would be made Earl of Ross in May, for example, he had drawn his dagger on the messenger in a fury that he had not also been created a duke. In July, Thomas Randolph considered that 'I know not, but it is greatly to be feared that he can have no long life among these people'. He was universally loathed in Scotland by everyone except Mary and his own father. Darnley was oblivious to his unpopularity.

Dangerously, Mary's powerful half-brother, James Stewart, Earl of Moray, was particularly offended by the match, with the siblings completely estranged by the summer. After unsuccessfully rebelling against his half-sister, Moray fled to England in October. Mary was furious with her half-brother and rode personally against him, with Darnley at her side wearing a suit of gilt armour. While she showed that her loyalties lay with Darnley rather than Moray in this instance, it was not long before she too began to question the wisdom of her hasty marriage.

The honeymoon period for Mary and Darnley proved to be a brief one. By October, it was noted that the couple were arguing, with it reported by Thomas Randolph that the main cause of the dispute was Mary's refusal to grant her husband the Crown Matrimonial as she had granted Francis.



This would have made Darnley king for life, even after her death, and would potentially have led to any children he might have by a subsequent wife inheriting the crown. She was at first conciliatory towards her husband, promising that she would put his demands before parliament when he had turned 21. Since this would require parliament's consent, there was no guarantee that it would be granted, as both Mary and Darnley knew.

Darnley, who was not used to being denied things, was increasingly furious. He did little to show any aptitude or interest in government, spending his time hunting and hawking or at other pleasures, in the company of a group of young gentlemen with whom he surrounded himself. In November 1565, while he spent nine

days hunting in Fife, Mary ordered a stamp of her husband's signature to be made to ensure that state documents would no longer be delayed by his absences. Darnley made no objection. He wanted the status of king, but not the responsibility.

Mary was soon growing disillusioned with her marriage. That December, she withdrew the silver ryal from circulation (a coin worth 30 shillings) that had been struck to commemorate their marriage. It was replaced with one reversing the couple's names to 'Mary and Henry' and referring to Darnley pointedly as the 'queen's husband'. Thomas Randolph noted, too, on Christmas Day that 'a while ago there was nothing but King and Queen, now the Queen's husband is the common word. He was wont in all writings to be first named: now

King consorts

In the 16th century, the husband of a queen automatically became a king

The day after his marriage, Lord Darnley was proclaimed King of Scotland. He was known as King Henry for the rest of his life, owing his title to his marriage to Scotland's reigning queen.

In the 16th century, it was widely understood that the husband of a queen was a king. Philip II of Spain, for example, on his marriage to Mary I of England in 1554 joined her on the throne as king of England. Coins were minted in the couple's joint names (as was also the case of Mary, Queen of Scots and Darnley). To emphasise Philip's kingship, documents from the period, which were commonly dated by regnal year, usually refer both the year of Mary's reign, and that of Philip, which started on his marriage - one year after his wife came to the throne.

While accorded the status of king, these king consorts were still dependent on the status of their wives. Philip II ceased to be king of England on his wife's death and the same would have happened if Darnley had outlived Mary. To make his status permanent, it was essential for Darnley to be granted the Crown Matrimonial by the Scottish parliament.



Following his marriage, Darnley was proclaimed King of Scotland, as shown here on a painted genealogy showing his son's descent

“Becoming a king had always been Darnley's greatest ambition. He had been raised to expect this by his parents”

he is placed second'. As a reigning queen, Mary still had considerable authority, although she had lost some of her status due to the introduction of a king of Scotland. In spite of this, as a wife, Mary was entirely subject to Darnley, although she increasingly came to resent his petulant outbursts. He was noted to be over-fond of drink at court. In February 1566 he got so drunk during celebrations that he 'gave her such words that she left the place in tears'.

While it was soon clear that Mary and Darnley were incompatible as a couple on a personal level, the marriage quickly proved fruitful. The Scottish royal family was massively depleted by the early 16th century. Neither Mary nor her father, James V, had had any surviving legitimate and full-

blooded siblings, with it necessary to go back to the descendants of James II to find the next heir to the Scottish crown. It had therefore been hoped by all that the queen would quickly fall pregnant. This soon proved to be the case. In late 1565 Mary conceived, being around three months pregnant by the end of the year.

Mary's pregnancy was a matter of state importance in both Scotland and England, since the child would have a good chance of succeeding to both crowns in due course. She took care to ensure its success, travelling by litter instead of on horseback as soon as she suspected her pregnancy. Darnley continued with his pursuits as if nothing had changed, to Mary's increasing frustration. As the Earl of Bedford, who was visiting Scotland,

noted on 20 December, 'the Lord Darnley followeth his pastimes more than the Queen is content withal; what it will breed hereafter I cannot say, but in the meantime there is some misliking between them'. The estrangement between the couple was easily apparent to those at court.

While Mary might privately consider that she had made a mistake in marrying so hastily, there was little that she could actually do about Darnley. She had raised him to become Scotland's king. Darnley's power was still dependent on her, but it was well known that a king outranked a queen. As one contemporary considered, Darnley believed that 'the marriage was done with the consent of the nobility who thought him worthy of the place; that the whole kingdom had their eyes upon him; they would follow and serve him upon the fields, where it was a shame a woman should command'.

By the early months of 1567, the royal couple were almost entirely estranged. They were, however, locked together in the unbreakable bond of matrimony.



The Rizzio Rebellion

On 9 March 1566 a simple evening supper party became the most terrifying night of Mary's life

Words by Elizabeth Norton



An 1868 scene depicting the murder of Rizzio, by Jean Luvès



ary's personal rule in Scotland had initially gone well, but a turning point was reached when she married Lord Darnley. After less than a year of marriage her authority

began to crumble, with the king consort embroiled in the Rizzio Rebellion, which nearly brought Mary's queenship to an end.

David Rizzio, an Italian, first arrived in Scotland in 1561 as part of an embassy from Savoy. He was 35 years old and of gentle birth. He loved fine clothing, although as one contemporary put it, "his appearance disfigured his elegance". All accounts of this intelligent, musical man record that he was very ugly, as well as being small in stature and hunchbacked. Rizzio's singing ability first brought him to the music-loving queen's attention.

He was also witty and good company, and soon became one of Mary's closest servants. In 1564 she appointed him as her French secretary, with his duties ensuring that he remained close by her at all times. Rizzio's rapid rise to power was resented by almost everyone at court, but Mary ignored the grumbling. She was close to Rizzio and confided in him as an advisor.

In spite of the troubles in her marriage, 1566 started well for Mary. She was pregnant, while her half-brother, the rebellious Earl of Moray, had been seemingly neutralised as a threat. Trouble was brewing, however. Mary's Catholicism had always been despised by her Protestant lords and the leaders of the Scottish Kirk. A Catholic queen was always going to be viewed with suspicion.

Rizzio and Darnley had, initially, got on well together, but by early 1566 it was clear that the secretary had sided with the queen in the royal couple's marital disputes. There were also rumours that Rizzio's closeness to Mary signalled the fact

that they were lovers, with some suggesting that he was the father of her child. Darnley was himself highly jealous of the secretary, complaining bitterly about the evenings in which Mary and Rizzio would play cards together, sitting up until one or two o'clock in the morning.

In parliament in March 1566, Mary intended to introduce bills of attainder against the Protestant lords who had rebelled against her. Among them was Moray, who was still in England. The origins of the conspiracy that grew against Mary early in 1566 are murky, with a group of Protestant lords, James Douglas, 4th Earl of Morton, Lord Lindsay and Lord Ruthven among those named as the plot's leaders. Moray, although careful not to commit himself too openly, was also involved.

The lords contacted Darnley, enticing him with the promise of the crown matrimonial, which would have made him King of Scotland independent of Mary. They also informed him that Mary and Rizzio were lovers, something which



A 17th-century portrait of Mary's Italian secretary, David Rizzio, who was described by contemporaries as small, hunchbacked and ugly

he professed to believe. Darnley was, by then, almost entirely estranged from his wife who, as the English ambassador noted in February, "repenteth her marriage" and "hateth Darnley and all his kin".

On 1 March 1566 Darnley and other lords involved in the conspiracy made a bond, confirming their intention to rid Scotland of those who had abused the queen's kindness - most notably among them "a stranger Italian called David". Moray signed the bond in Newcastle on 2 March, with the document promising Darnley the crown matrimonial. Since Darnley was, at least nominally, a Catholic, he had little in common with the Protestant lords with whom he had allied himself. However, he made a very useful tool, as Moray and his associates recognised.

Mary was entirely oblivious to the plotting, believing herself to be in a position of strength as she awaited the birth of an heir. She was overconfident, ignoring any warnings that something was afoot. When she was informed by James Melville that he had heard "dark speeches" of action to be taken against her she ignored him, informing him that she had also heard something similar, but that she paid it no heed since "our

countrymen were well-wordy". As far as Mary was concerned she had bested those Protestant lords who had rebelled against her, with Moray safely out of the way in England.

Mary was at Holyrood on the evening of 9 March, dining in her private apartments. It was an intimate party with her half-brother, Lord Robert Stewart; her half-sister, Jean, Countess of Argyll and servants Arthur Erskine and Anthony Standen. Rizzio, too, was present.

Mary's apartment at Holyrood was on the second floor, with Darnley's on the floor immediately below. These two lavish suites of rooms were linked by a small staircase which led into the queen's bedroom, close to the room in which the queen was dining.

As the group sat down to dine they were surprised by Darnley, who appeared without

warning at the head of the staircase. Mary indicated that he was welcome, but was surprised again when Patrick, Lord Ruthven, appeared behind Darnley, wearing a steel cap and with armour visible beneath his clothing. Ruthven, who had risen from his sickbed to join Darnley, presented an alarming sight due to his pale skin and fevered eyes. The first thought of those assembled was that he was delirious.

On seeing Mary, Ruthven called out, "Let it please your Majesty that yonder man David come forth of your privy-chamber where he hath been overlong." Mary responded that Rizzio was there as her guest, but Ruthven replied that the Italian had offended her honour. Mary then turned to Darnley and asked him angrily if this was his doing, before Ruthven entered into a tirade against Mary and Rizzio's relationship.

Rizzio had, by then, moved into a window at the end of the room and, when Ruthven lunged towards him, Mary's attendants attempted to intercede. Touching his dagger, Ruthven declared: "Lay not hands on me, for I will not be handled." With that, five of his men also entered from the privy staircase.

At that, the entire room was in confusion, with the table tipped over and candles extinguished. Mary's half-sister, the Countess of Argyll, managed to catch the last candle, leaving only a flickering light in the small room. Rizzio had moved to cling to the heavily pregnant Mary's skirts in the chaos. Darnley restrained his wife, while a pistol was pointed at her belly in the struggle. Rizzio was then physically dragged away from the queen and pulled out of the room. As he cried out desperately for Mary to save him, he was stabbed at the head of the staircase more than 50 times. Darnley's dagger was deliberately used by George Douglas - who was the first to strike - in order to implicate him in the crime. Rizzio's body was then dragged down the staircase and laid naked on a chest.

It was a terrifying moment for Mary, who was then more than six-months pregnant. She believed that Rizzio was first stabbed while he still clutched to her skirts, with the dagger blade passing over her shoulder to stab her hapless servant. She also believed that the conspirators had intended her own death - and that of her unborn child - in order to place Darnley alone on the throne.

The noise of the murder had, in any event, roused her guards, who clashed with supporters

"Mary was entirely oblivious to the plotting, believing herself to be in a position of strength as she awaited the birth of an heir"



By early 1566 Mary had successfully established her personal rule in Scotland, but she would soon be challenged

of the murderers crying, "A Douglas, a Douglas." Finding herself alone with Darnley, Mary angrily confronted him, also accusing Ruthven when he too entered. As alarm bells were rung through Edinburgh, Darnley went to the window to try to calm the people who had assembled outside. When Mary also attempted to speak, Lord Lindsay threatened that they would "cut you into collops and cast you over the walls".

In shock and under guard, Mary was later informed by one of her ladies that Rizzio was dead. After weeping briefly she said, "No more tears now; I will think upon revenge." She also sent another lady to fetch her ciphers and writings from Rizzio's room.

Mary spent the night at Holyrood with only one attendant. She was, by then, aware that Moray and the other Protestant lords were on the road back to Scotland. Mary would later claim - probably with justification - that the rebels had intended to hold her prisoner if she survived the coup, allowing Darnley to rule in her stead.

Although she had been shocked by what had happened and been outmanoeuvred, Mary was very far from beaten. Dissembling her fury, she resolved to try to win Darnley back to her cause. When he entered her room early the next morning, he begged her to forgive him. During that day, in which Mary also considered escaping out of the window by rope, she won Darnley back to her cause. Over the past few months she had got the measure of her weak-willed husband, and was able to convince him that he was just as likely to end up under house arrest as she unless he defected once again to her cause.



James Douglas, 4th Earl of Morton, who was named as one of the leading conspirators in Rizzio's murder

The next day, Moray arrived in Edinburgh. While he and Mary had been estranged since his rebellion the previous summer, she was not aware of his involvement in the Rizzio plot. On seeing him she embraced him and cried out, "Oh my brother, if you had been here, they had not used me thus." When he lectured her on morality, however, the siblings quarrelled once again. Mary then pretended to be in labour to end the interview and she was turned over to the care of a midwife.

That night, Mary and Darnley quietly escaped down the privy staircase and out through the servants' quarters, passing close to a fresh grave which Darnley confessed was where Rizzio was buried. Outside they were met by men loyal to them, who had provided horses. It was a dark, frightening ride, with Darnley continually spurring the horses onwards, crying, "Come on! Come on! By God's blood, they will murder both you and me if they can catch us." When Mary cried that she would lose her baby, Darnley bluntly informed her that they could have more. It took them five hours to reach Dunbar Castle and safety.

Rizzio's murder and the betrayal of Darnley, Moray and the other Scottish lords whom she had trusted was the most brutal event of Mary's life. She always believed that it had been an attempt on her own life and was never able to forgive those who had taken part. While down, Mary was far from out. As men began to flock to her cause at Dunbar, she was able to re-enter Edinburgh on 18 March at the head of an army. Most of those involved in the plot had already fled, although the queen - still feigning a reconciliation - rode beside her husband, Lord Darnley.

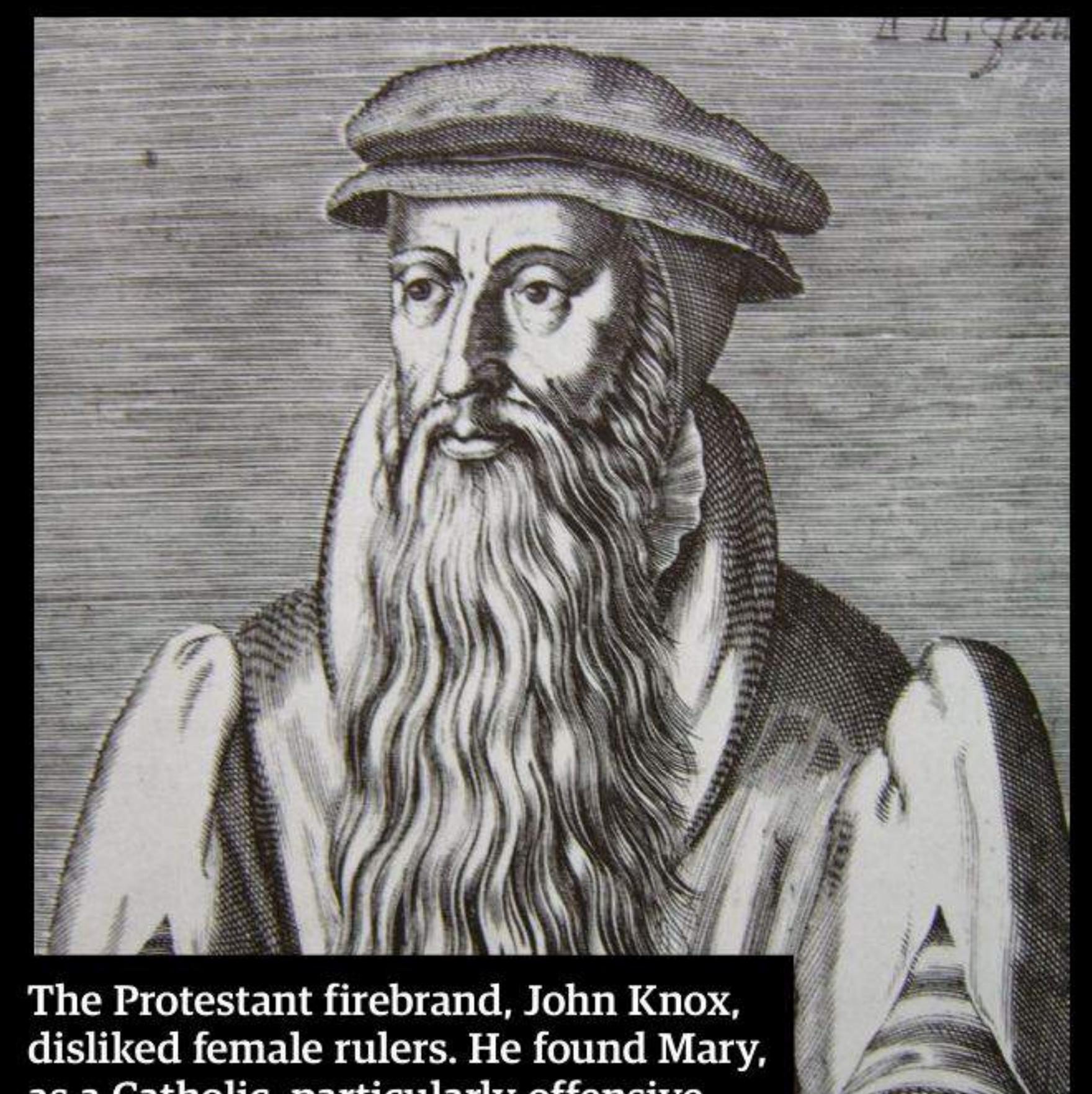
The Scottish Kirk

While Mary was prepared to be tolerant of her Protestant subjects, the Scottish Kirk was alarmed by her Catholicism

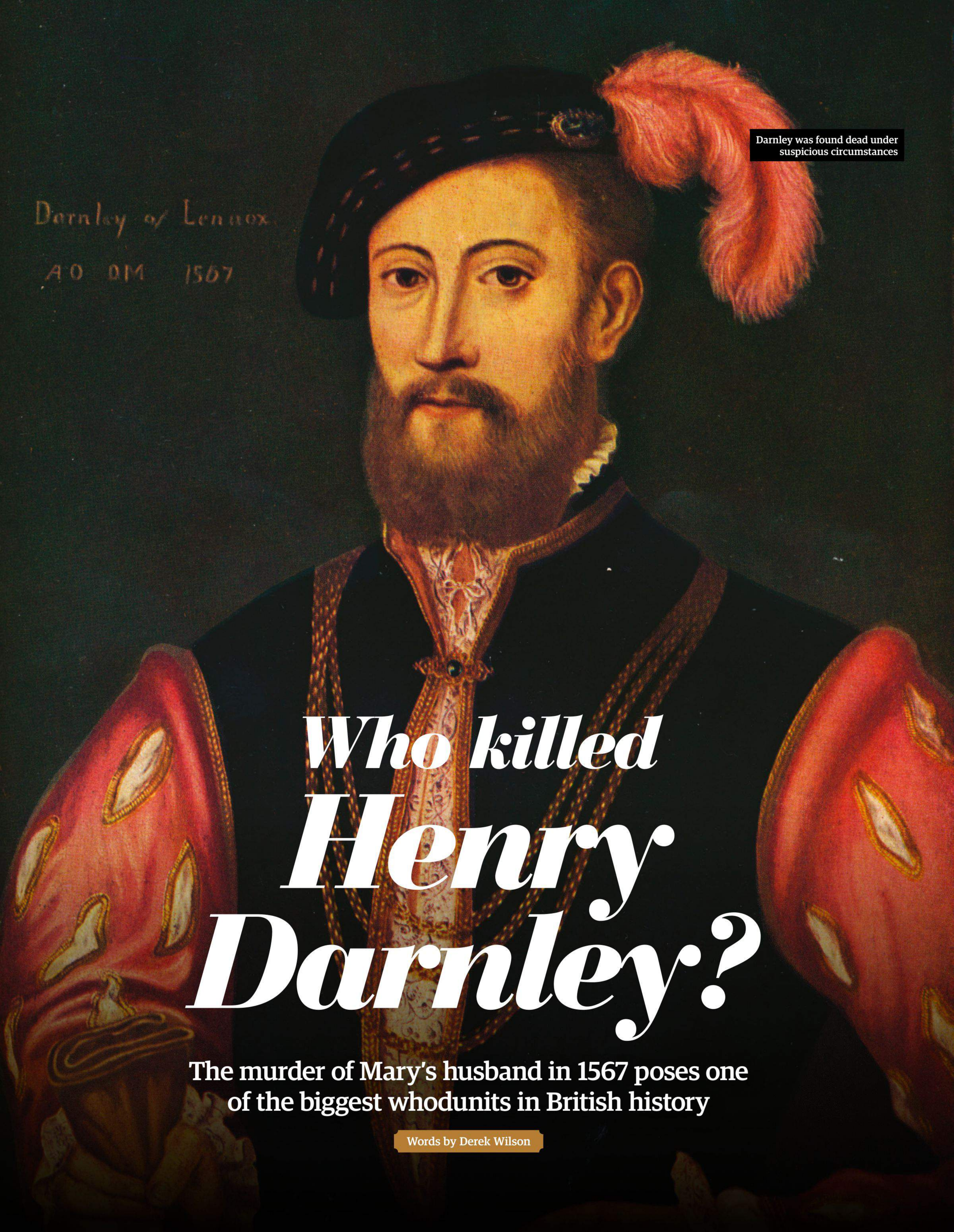
Mary had left behind a Catholic Scotland when she sailed to France in 1548. She returned to a kingdom irreversibly altered by the Reformation.

Protestant ideas had been gaining influence throughout Mary's childhood. In 1560 the Scottish parliament confirmed that the kingdom's religion would be reformed. The outspoken preacher, John Knox, led a group of churchmen who produced an official 'Confession', which set out the new state faith. Under Knox's guidance the Scottish Kirk was to be based on the teaching of John Calvin, who advocated a particularly austere form of Protestantism and envisaged a national church to which the state was subject. Mary always refused to approve the Confession.

John Knox disliked the idea of female rule - particularly that of a Catholic queen. Mary tolerated the Scottish Kirk without seeking to impose her Catholic faith on her people. Knox, however, would admit no middle ground, and was always opposed to his sovereign's private worship. Mary's half-brother, James Stewart, Earl of Moray, was also a fervent Protestant and supporter of the Scottish Kirk, although he was politically opposed to Knox. Mary's Catholicism was always viewed as a threat to the Scottish Kirk by church leaders, with some involving themselves in the Rizzio rebellion against her.



The Protestant firebrand, John Knox, disliked female rulers. He found Mary, as a Catholic, particularly offensive

A portrait of Henry Darnley, a man with a full beard and a black cap with a red feather. He is wearing a dark blue or black tunic with a gold chain and a red cloak with gold trim. The background is dark.

Darnley was found dead under
suspicious circumstances

Darnley of Lennox

AD DM 1567

Who killed Henry Darnley?

The murder of Mary's husband in 1567 poses one
of the biggest whodunits in British history

Words by Derek Wilson



In the early hours of 10 February 1567, a violent explosion ripped through the air in the area of Edinburgh's Cowgate. Those who rushed to the scene discovered that the provost's lodging of the church of St Mary in the Fields (Kirk o' Fields) had been reduced to

a pile of rubble. That was terrible enough, but when people scoured the ruins in search of survivors, they came upon something much more sinister.

The church complex was adjacent to the city wall. In an orchard beyond the boundary, some 14 metres from the church, lay two bodies - one was that of Henry Darnley, husband of the Scottish queen. Had the royal consort and his body servant, William Taylor, been killed by the blast that had hurled them into the air? No, there were no marks or tears on their nightshirts that would certainly have been present if they had been killed in the explosion. Nor did the bodies show any other signs of violence. Further search of the area in the winter dawn produced a rope, a chair, a furred cloak and a dagger. This, in brief, describes the crime scene at Kirk o' Fields. The mystery it presented might have taxed the deductive powers of Sherlock Holmes. It has certainly produced many 'solutions' over the last four and a half centuries.

The first question to ask, and the one with which all Edinburgh was buzzing within hours, was 'cui bono'? This legal maxim, which translates as 'who benefits', proposes that the perpetrator of a crime is someone who stands to gain from it, enabling investigators to draw up a list of suspects. In seeking to discover who had reason to want Darnley dead, we need to consider the events preceding the murder.

It had been less than a year since Mary had been forced to witness the vicious attack on Rizzio and listen to his terrified screams as he was hacked to death in an adjacent chamber. Her attendants then had heard her utter the word 'revenge'. However, over the ensuing weeks she had given the impression that she and her husband were reconciled. In June 1566, the queen gave birth to a son, the future James VI. Darnley was not present and only deigned to pay her a fleeting visit. In the autumn she made a long journey on horseback to visit Hermitage Castle where her friend James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, lay ill, having been wounded in a border skirmish.

Soon afterwards, Mary herself fell very seriously ill. She was close to death and, in agony of mind as well as body, she longed for it. This scare gave the 'Darnley problem' a new political urgency. The consort had always wanted to be declared king in his own right and it was obvious that, if Mary died, he would seek to be regent during the minority of James VI and lay claim to greater powers than he currently enjoyed. Darnley did, in fact, at this juncture make further efforts to browbeat his wife. Mary and her councillors debated what should be

The infant James VI, son of Darnley and Mary, Queen of Scots



done, considering - and rejecting - the possibility of divorce. An approach was made to Queen Elizabeth suggesting that, if Mary died, young James would be sent into England and brought up at the English court. Did Mary and her advisers also discuss a more sinister solution to the Darnley problem?

Darnley cannot have been ignorant of the council's hostility. He may even have suspected that something drastic was being planned - he certainly took great care of his security. His absence from his son's christening in December may have been more than an act of petulance. Certainly, in

early January, he travelled to the home of his father, the Earl of Lennox, near Glasgow.

Here, surrounded by hundreds of armed family retainers, he felt safe. Safe but not well. It was now Darnley's turn to fall ill - with syphilis. Yet there may have been more to his withdrawal from Edinburgh. Reports reached the Scottish queen that her husband planned to seize the prince, rule in his name and have Mary locked up. So thick was the air with plots and rumours of plots that it is impossible, now, to separate real conspiracy from fearful imagination.

Return to Scotland

With the situation becoming unbearably tense, the queen took the initiative. She travelled to Glasgow on 22 January 1567, taking care to be protected by a large armed guard. She went to her husband's bedside, aiming to get him away from his home territory and lodge him somewhere where he could be watched 24/7 and, if necessary, restrained. But was this all she had in mind? Darnley had his suspicions and it took all the queen's wiles, over several days, to persuade him to ride back with her. As to lodging, this seems to have been a compromise arrangement. He refused to return to Holyrood, partly for reasons of security and partly through vanity - his syphilis had brought him out in sores and postules and he did not wish to be seen in that condition. Thus, he chose Kirk o' Fields, on the edge of the city, where his treatment could be concluded with immersion

in foul-smelling sulphurous baths. Darnley also felt secure in the knowledge that the chosen house belonged to Robert Balfour, brother of his friend Sir James Balfour. What he did not know was that the Balfours had changed sides. And, by the way, James Balfour was in charge of ordering gunpowder for the castle ordnance.

Darnley took up residence on 1 February. Mary remained at Holyrood but visited her husband frequently and made herself so agreeable to him that he could write to his father on the 7th that she "doth use herself like a natural and loving wife".

His condition improved steadily and the disfiguring marks had so far disappeared that he could declare that he would return to the palace (about ten minutes' walk away) on the 10th. So, on the evening of the 9th the queen arrived with a bevy of courtiers in festive mood, all come to celebrate the invalid's recovery. Darnley pressed his wife to stay the night but she declined on the grounds that she had promised to attend the wedding festivities of two of her attendants. Thus, at around 11 o'clock, she took her leave. By this time, the cellar was well stocked with gunpowder.

"So, was Mary Stuart up to her neck in the plot to murder her husband? Was she playing a deadly duplicitous game?"



William Maitland was another suspect in the suspicious circumstances

So, was Mary Stuart up to her neck in the plot to murder her husband? Was she playing a deadly duplicitous game? She certainly had motive enough to want Darnley out of the way. She had opportunity, having engineered the victim's presence at Kirk o' Fields. And she had the means - not to do the job herself, but to fire up her noble councillors to do the dirty work for her. And she may have had yet another incentive - in the weeks and months that followed, observers were accusing her of a crime passionelle.

Working backwards from what followed after, they deduced that the queen had taken another lover, James Hepburn, Lord Bothwell. When, within three months of Darnley's death, Mary and Bothwell were married, people recalled the queen's visit to Hermitage Castle and concluded that by then they had become more than just good friends. What was the reason for the long ride through the border country, if not to plan the removal of the only obstacle to their happy union? The couple's post-murder behaviour was certainly ill-advised, but did it prove Mary's involvement in premeditated murder? No one in the whispering gallery of the court seems to have seen the Bothwell match coming before the early spring of 1567.

And there is one other piece of evidence that stubbornly refuses to fit in with the theory that Mary was the driving force behind 'murder most foul'. It concerns Anglo-Scottish diplomacy at the highest level. Back in 1560, the Treaty of Edinburgh had put an end to Anglo-French rivalry in Scotland by ordering the removal of foreign troops from Scottish soil and the rejection of the sovereignty claims that had lain at the root of the conflict between the rulers north and south of Hadrian's Wall for generations.

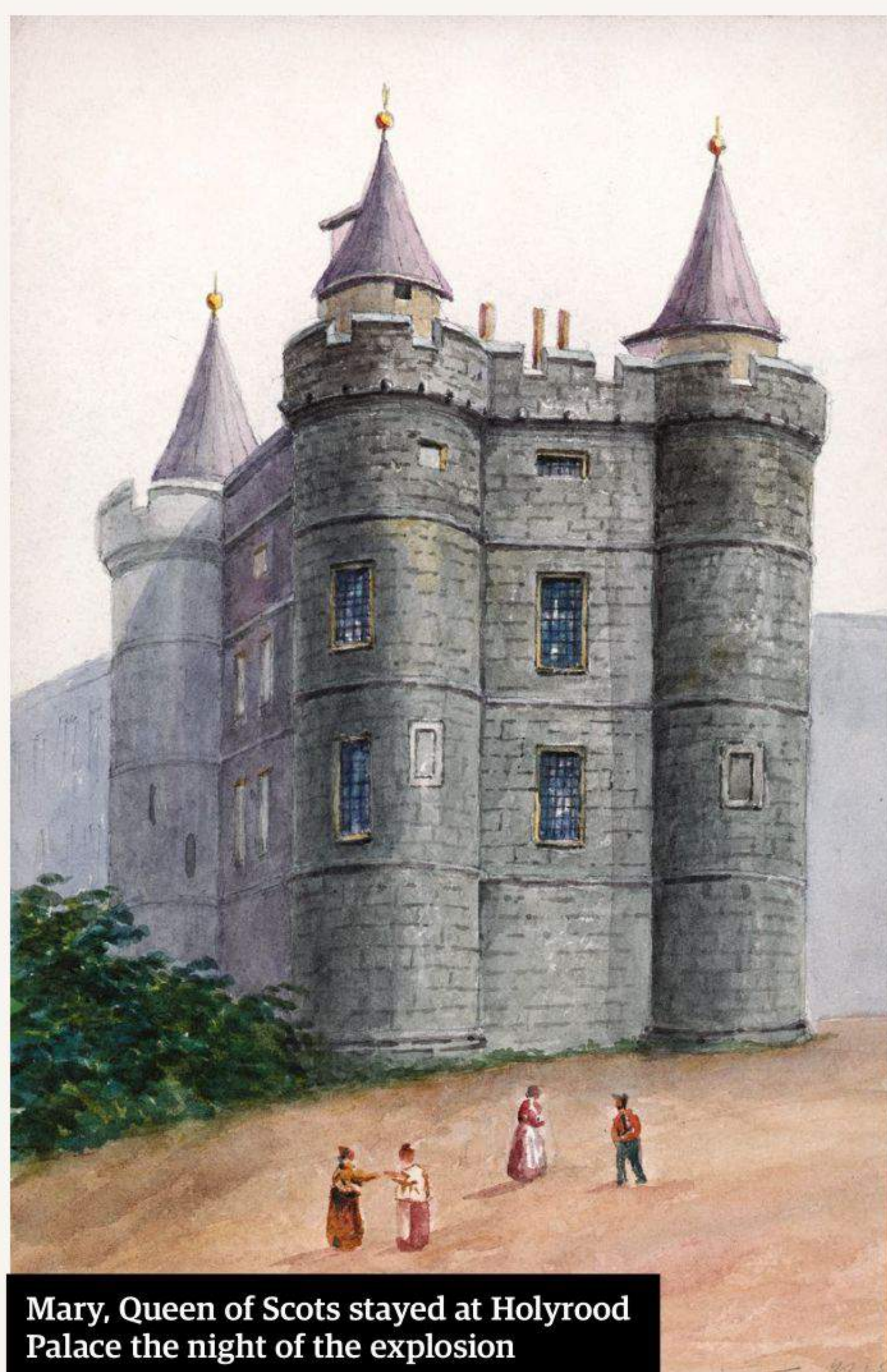
Mary, at that time married to the French dauphin, had always insisted that Elizabeth had been bastardised by her father, that his deathbed will was a forgery, and that, therefore, she was Henry VIII's closest relation. On her heraldic shield she quartered the arms of all three countries. She was furious at being forced to abandon her claim to Elizabeth's crown. Mary never accepted the



James Douglas, Earl of Morton, was one of the suspects in the murder of Darnley



Anglo-Scottish hostilities dated back centuries



Mary, Queen of Scots stayed at Holyrood Palace the night of the explosion

Treaty of Edinburgh and kept her eyes fixed on establishing rule over the two kingdoms – either for herself or for her son. Her rival's disinclination to marry kept alive her hopes and she kept up a personal correspondence with her sister monarch.

It paid off. In 1566, Elizabeth, ceaselessly badgered by her ministers to secure the succession, proposed a new Anglo-Scottish treaty acknowledging Mary's claim as her own heir, subject to certain conditions. Mary joyfully accepted the terms and ordered her reply to be carried back to London. The date was 8 February 1567. The Kirk o' Fields atrocity finally and irrevocably torpedoed her dynastic dreams. Even if she had been a party to the plot, would she have allowed it to go ahead with so much at

"If the queen is exonerated, suspicion falls on a syndicate of noble councillors"

stake? Mary's immediate reaction to news of her husband's murder was shock horror, partly because she feared (or claimed to fear) that she might have been an intended victim. She offered a massive reward for information and even a pardon to any conspirator who would inform on his accomplices. Genuine response or well-rehearsed performance?

If the queen is exonerated, suspicion falls on a syndicate of her noble councillors, acting without her knowledge. Who were they; what were their motives; what did they stand to gain from this atrocity? The significant political players were three Ms: Moray, Morton and Maitland. James Stewart, Earl of Moray, was an illegitimate son of James V and, therefore, Mary's half-brother. Before the Darnley marriage he was the queen's most trusted adviser. Thereafter, he was sidelined. As a Protestant, he hated Darnley's pro-Catholic policies and had been forced to spend several months as an exile in England in 1565-66.

James Douglas, Earl of Morton, was another pro-English Protestant. He had been Mary's Lord Chancellor but had become implicated in the Rizzio murder that had been instigated by Darnley, who subsequently changed sides and dumped his co-conspirators. Morton, too, had taken refuge south of the border and only returned early in 1567. William Maitland was Mary's trusted secretary and ambassador to the English court. He, too, had been caught up in the Rizzio murder but had not forfeited Mary's trust. He was devoted to his mistress and to the English alliance and he saw that Darnley was the obstacle to the peace and security of the queen and the realm.

And then there is Bothwell. He was the archetypal philanderer/adventurer who, in the language of a later era, would have been called a 'cad'. In his 20s he had married a Norwegian noblewoman and swiftly run through her fortune. In 1566 he had married (presumably bigamously) Jean Gordon, daughter of the earl of Huntly. Yet within months this Scottish Lothario was practising his charms on the queen herself with evident success – within days, Bothwell was being identified as the principal agent of Darnley's murder. While the Earl of Lennox demanded a trial, activists went about the capital posting placards denouncing Bothwell. But the suspect was – for the time being, at least – secure.

Among the political leaders of the nation there was a general sense of relief that Darnley was no more. Whatever Morton and Maitland knew, they gave Bothwell their open support and the queen was rapidly coming under his spell. She had jumped from the frying pan to the fire. Bothwell was as much a braggart and bully as Darnley but she could not or would not see it. She loaded him with honours and consented to Lennox's demand for a trial before the privy council. It took place on 12 April and was a travesty of justice. Edinburgh was swarming with the armed retainers of Bothwell and others who had good reason for not wanting the truth to come out. Lennox and his supporters did not dare enter the city to present

Drawing of a murder

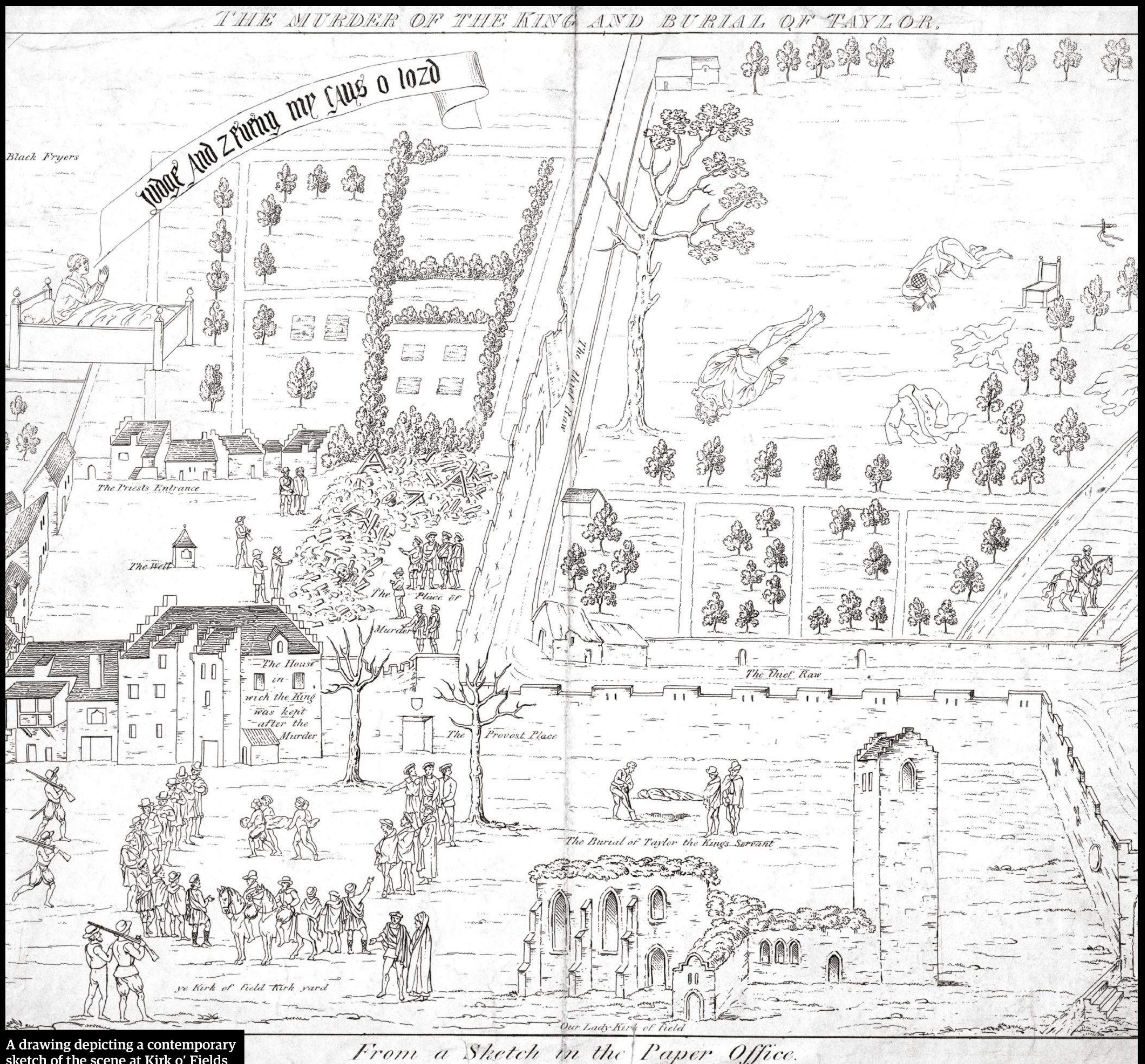
The sketch sent to Cecil in the aftermath of the murder was something between a groundplan, a graphic narrative and a political statement. It mapped out the buildings - the church and the adjacent houses. It showed their relationship to the nearby streets and the city wall.

The pile of debris that was the provost's lodging is clearly shown. A crowd watches as Darnley's body is carried away but no onlookers

are present at his burial. A third of the picture is taken up with the scene in the orchard where the two bodies are depicted much larger than all the other figures.

To the right, a group of horsemen appear - presumably the conspirators making their escape. Filling the top left-hand corner there is a poignant vignette of Darnley's infant son, the future James VI, sitting up in his cot and

praying, "Judge and avenge my cause, O Lord." The picture conveys different aspects of the tragedy. While the unlamented Darnley is laid to rest in one corner, his now fatherless child cries for revenge - he was, of course, too young to do any such thing. Whatever contemporary Scots felt about the removal of Darnley, there is no doubting that the manner of his death made an impact on them all.



A drawing depicting a contemporary sketch of the scene at Kirk o' Fields

From a Sketch in the Paper Office.

their evidence. The 'not guilty' verdict was a foregone conclusion.

So, we have our list of suspects. One of them was acquitted in a legal process that does not bear examination. All of them have come before the bar of public opinion, both in their own day and over the intervening centuries. None of the individuals at the centre of the affair (with the exception of Darnley's family) made a serious attempt to unravel the Kirk o' Fields mystery either because they were, in one way or another, involved or because they shared the conviction that ridding the world of Henry Darnley was a wholly laudable act. One reason why the murder remains a mystery is that no proper inquest was ever carried out. This means that not only do we not know whodunnit, but we also don't know how it was done. What can we, therefore, deduce about the extraordinary events of 10 February 1567?

Fact 1: Several people escaped from the building. Detonating a bomb in someone's house is not a fail-safe way of killing the intended victim. There were several residents in the provost's lodging that night, mostly servants. Apart from Darnley and Taylor, it appears that only two others died in the blast. The perpetrators of the crime must have known that there was a chance Darnley

would survive. From their point of view, a failed attempt would have been worse than no attempt at all. It would actually have strengthened Darnley's position, putting him on his guard and instigating a vigorous search for his attackers.

Fact 2: Darnley and Taylor were murdered before or after the explosion. Since there were no marks on their bodies it was assumed at the time - probably correctly - that both men had been smothered or strangled.

Fact 3: The location of the bodies was wrong. It is very unlikely that, amid all the falling rubble, they would have been thrown clear and right over the city wall.

Fact 4: An odd assortment of items were found at the site with the bodies - a chair, a rope, a knife and a cloak.

Fact 5: There were witnesses. Two women living in houses nearby were roused by the bang, looked out and saw a group of well-dressed men of obvious rank hurrying past. When they were examined at Bothwell's trial, they were not pressed for details and were quickly dismissed as blabbing fools, an act that has a distinct odour of fish!

We can juggle these facts, as chroniclers have over the centuries, and come up with a variety of

scenarios. The two men escaped but were tracked down and killed in the garden. The criminals intended to lynch Darnley - hence the chair and rope - but had to improvise another means of murder at the last moment. The victims were despatched in their chamber, then carried to the place where they were found. The explosion was merely a diversion enabling the culprits to do the deed and then escape in the confusion.

None of these 'solutions' deal satisfactorily with all the known facts. Perhaps it is that that provides, if not the solution, at least a fuller explanation. None of the tidy versions make sense because there was nothing tidy about this desperate deed. The original plan was botched. Once the slow fuse had been lit in the cellar, it would only take one detail to go awry for hurried or panicked improvisation to take over. The Kirk o' Fields mystery remains just that - a mystery, and if we believe we can tie up all the loose ends, we deceive ourselves.

What matters more from a historian's point of view are the consequences. What should have been the end of Mary Stuart's problems was, in fact, their beginning. The Kirk o' Fields atrocity and Mary's reaction to it destroyed her credibility. The path from Darnley's murder to the queen's abdication was short and slippery.



Courtiers claim that Mary swore vengeance after the murder of David Rizzio

The spider in a corner of the web

One man sought to protect his queen from any threat that lay across the border

In October 1562, Elizabeth I had contracted smallpox. It was a disaster that threatened the peaceful royal succession and the security of the state. This was something that dominated the thinking and the statecraft of the queen's most trusted advisor, William Cecil, and he could not, therefore, avoid being closely involved in affairs north of the border. As long as Elizabeth remained adamant about not marrying, the claim of Mary Stuart had to be taken seriously. As a result, Cecil maintained a continual and very detailed correspondence with his agents in Scotland.

His objectives were twofold - the maintenance of a stable, Protestant, pro-English government in Scotland and the prevention of Mary inheriting the English crown. Since Elizabeth refused to discuss the succession, Cecil acted on his own initiative a lot of the time. He knew in advance about Rizzio's murder and he succoured Moray, Maitland and Morton during their English exile.

Cecil was completely adept at all the arts of political intrigue. He not only kept spies in the Scottish court and had some of Mary's intimates on his payroll, but he was also not above using agents provocateurs to lure her into indiscretions. While Elizabeth was dealing privately with Mary concerning the legitimacy of the latter's claim, Cecil was helping to engineer the pardoning of Rizzio's murderers and their return to Scotland. The plot against Darnley did not take Cecil by surprise - he was not part of the conspiracy, but he also did nothing to convey his suspicions to Queen Mary nor to his own mistress.

It was simply in England's interests, as he saw it, to destabilise the current Catholic regime in Edinburgh. In the immediate aftermath of Darnley's murder, it was Cecil's agent, Sir William Drury, who carried out for his patron the only really thorough investigation that was made. It was he who provided an extraordinary, detailed drawing of the crime scene. A list of those who were delighted to hear news of Henry Darnley's assassination would certainly include the English secretary of state, Sir William Cecil.



Sir William Cecil, chief advisor to Queen Elizabeth I for most of her reign

An early-20th-century romanticised image depicting Mary, Queen of Scots, and James Bothwell in a forest. Mary is on the left, wearing a long, flowing gown and a bonnet, looking up at Bothwell. Bothwell is on the right, wearing a dark, patterned tunic and a ruff collar, looking down at Mary. They are standing in a dense forest with tall, thin trees and a path leading into the distance.

An early-20th-century
romanticised image
depicting Mary, Queen of
Scots and Bothwell

Bothwell the bigamist

Contemporaries thought that Mary's choice
of second husband was damaging, but her third
marriage was politically catastrophic

Words by Elizabeth Norton



ary, Queen of Scots is remembered primarily for her shockingly bad judgment. None of the actions that she took during her troubled life shocked contemporaries more than her hasty third

marriage to a man reputed to have been her second husband's murderer.

The man who would become Mary's third husband was around seven or eight years older than her. The child of divorced parents, James Hepburn studied in Paris during his youth and was a highly educated young man. He was well-travelled, living in Denmark for a time, as well as crisscrossing northern Europe. He became Earl of Bothwell in 1556 on the death of his father, and assumed a number of hereditary offices, including lord high admiral of Scotland.

Although very strong and muscular, Bothwell otherwise cut an unprepossessing figure. He was considerably shorter than Mary, being only around five feet six inches. He had a misshapen nose, presumably caused by a break early in life. Although not as notably ugly as David Rizzio, dark-haired Bothwell was referred to by one contemporary as looking "like an ape in purple". He was raised by his great-uncle, Bishop Hepburn of Moray, and was always a staunch Protestant. Nonetheless, he was also loyal to the Scottish crown, supporting first Marie de Guise and then her daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots.

Bothwell was a very different character to Darnley. He had been hard-schooled in Scottish politics, at one point challenging the Earl of Arran to single combat. He was also aggressive and quick to anger, once kicking his servant in the stomach over a slight disagreement. He was, as the English ambassador to France, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, considered, a "glorious, rash and hazardous young



Bothwell, painted to celebrate his second marriage, two years before he married Mary



Mary made her reliance on Bothwell clear when she went to visit him at Hermitage Castle in October 1566

"On learning that he was one of the intended victims, he had fled, later joining Mary at Dunbar Castle"

man". Violent and boastful, he was as unsuited to the role of royal consort and Mary's husband as his predecessor. Bothwell had no interest in trying to charm anyone; he was blunt and bluff and not interested in winning friends. He did not even try very hard to charm Mary.

Bothwell had become a member of Mary's Privy Council after she returned to Scotland, along with much of the leading Scottish nobility. Even then, he got into trouble and was ordered to leave Edinburgh after a street fight. He was later imprisoned after allegedly urging the Earl of Arran to kidnap the queen. After a failed attempt to escape to France, his ship was driven to England where he was also imprisoned.

Bothwell was released in 1563 and spent the next few years aimlessly in England, Scotland and Europe. During the period he earned Mary's anger following reports that he had claimed that she and Elizabeth I combined "could not make one honest woman". He was reconciled to the queen in the summer of 1565 and early the next year married one of her ladies-in-waiting in a ceremony attended by Mary. Bothwell was at Holyrood Palace on the night of David Rizzio's murder. On learning that he was one of the intended victims, he had fled, later joining Mary at Dunbar Castle after her own escape.

Bothwell's opposition to Darnley and also the Protestant Scottish lords helped endear him to the

queen. By late June, less than a week after Prince James' birth, it was noted that "Bothwell's credit with the Queen is greater than all the rest together". This, naturally, led to increasing hostility from the other Scottish lords, who already disliked Bothwell. Ignoring this, Mary and Bothwell continued to grow close, with the queen viewing him as one of the few members of her court that she could rely upon. She visited him at Hermitage Castle in October 1566 while he recovered from wounds sustained while he was acting as lieutenant of the border. Her favourite was the prime suspect when Darnley was murdered on 10 February 1567. There was very good reason for this - he was almost certainly guilty.

While Mary had been estranged from Darnley for many months, she likely hadn't known of the murder in advance. Indeed, her first instinct was to consider that the gunpowder had also been intended for her. She probably quickly came to understand that her husband had been murdered by the lords who supported her, with Bothwell the most likely candidate. Nonetheless, she was too reliant on the Earl for support to see the wisdom in separating from him, or to allow the crime to be tried fairly in court. She could not risk losing him.

On hearing the news of Darnley's death, Mary had ordered her court into mourning. Her period of official mourning ended on 23 March and,

“Three Wives Alive”

At the time of his marriage to Mary, Bothwell had two other living wives. However, he had only divorced one

While Mary, Queen of Scots notched up three husbands herself, she did at least wait until each husband was dead before taking on the next spouse. This was not the case with her third husband, James Hepburn, the Earl of Bothwell, who was reported to have had “three wives alive” after the publication of his marriage to Mary.

Bothwell met Anna Throndsen, the beautiful daughter of a retired Norwegian admiral, in Denmark in 1560. The couple were certainly betrothed – something which could constitute a valid marriage in the 16th century – and may have undergone a marriage ceremony. They travelled together to Flanders and lived there for some months before Bothwell abandoned Anna after running out of funds.

In 1566 Bothwell married Jean Gordon, one of Mary’s ladies-in-waiting. It was a political match, since Jean was the sister of the influential Earl of Huntly. On 24 April 1567 Jean raised an action for divorce, with their marriage ending the following month.

Bothwell might also have had a fourth wife living at the time of his final marriage. In his youth he seduced the 43-year-old Janet Beton, who was known as the Wizard Lady of Branhholm due to a reputation for witchcraft. Rumours suggested that they too were married.



Jean Gordon became the second Lady Bothwell in 1566. She divorced Bothwell only eight days before he married Mary



Dunbar Castle, where Bothwell took Mary following her abduction. Once he had raped her, honour demanded that she marry him

following a mass and dirge she emerged from seclusion. The following day, faced with her father-in-law the Earl of Lennox’s continual complaints, she permitted him to privately charge Bothwell with Darnley’s murder before parliament. Mary was highly stressed and soon became ill, something which only added to her melancholy. She probably knew that the trial would not be a fair one, since Lennox was too intimidated to enter Edinburgh for fear of Bothwell’s men. In Darnley’s father’s absence, it was impossible for Bothwell to be convicted and he was acquitted that evening.

Mary’s growing reliance on Bothwell was soon widely known. Not long after Darnley’s death placards began to appear in Edinburgh, depicting the queen as a naked mermaid – the symbol of a prostitute – next to a hare, which was Bothwell’s symbol. Mary ordered the culprits to be apprehended, but she failed to heed the public mood. By 29 March it was reported that Bothwell and Mary were to marry.

Although Bothwell does not, at first glance, appear as a likely husband for Mary, it is easy to see what attracted her to him. He was always fiercely loyal – first to her mother and then to her – in spite of the religious differences. He was also strong and must have seemed, in the wake of Rizzio’s murder, like a man who could protect her. For Bothwell, the attraction was obvious. He desired the crown.

Bothwell himself drew up a document, known as the Ainslie Tavern Bond, which was signed by 28 members of the nobility and clergy on 19 April. This document, which once again declared the Earl of Bothwell’s innocence of Darnley’s murder, also pointed out that the queen was now “destitute of a husband, in which solitary state, the commonwealth may not permit her to



William Maitland advised the queen against marriage to Bothwell, but recognised the impossibility of her position

remain”. Since she needed to marry, the document suggested that there could be no better candidate than Bothwell himself. He had, after all, offered such “affectionate and hearty service” and was native rather than foreign born, as well as having “other good qualities”.

Armed with his bond, Bothwell visited Mary at Seton where he proposed marriage to her. Mary was shocked by such a direct approach and professed herself unable to answer. It looked to her like the chief men of her kingdom were asking her to marry Bothwell and she was probably unaware of how unwilling some of the bond’s signatories had been. Mary always claimed that she refused to consider marrying Bothwell when presented with

the bond, due to the common belief that he was involved in Darnley's murder. It is not impossible, however, that the couple had already agreed to take drastic action. Having seen firsthand the violent and unpredictable nature of some of the Scottish nobility, the idea of a powerful protector was appealing to the queen.

After refusing Bothwell, Mary set out to Stirling Castle to visit her young son, who was still only ten months old. She arrived on 21 April and spent the whole of the next day with her baby, away from the cares of state. Her mind was evidently troubled since, while at Stirling, she wrote to the Bishop of Mondovi in Turin, who had previously been the papal nuncio, confirming her devotion to her kingdom and her Catholic faith. She would not have been aware that after that visit, she would never see her son again.

Mary left Stirling on 23 April, heading once again towards Edinburgh. She had intended her visit to James to be a private one and therefore had only a small party with her. Along with her advisors William Maitland, the Earl of Huntly and James Melville, there were 30 men to guard her. The group spent the night at Linlithgow Palace, before setting out the next morning.

Mary was around six miles outside Edinburgh on 24 April when a force of 800 men suddenly appeared, with Bothwell at their head. On seeing Mary, Bothwell rode forward and took her bridle in his hands, informing his sovereign that there was trouble in Edinburgh and that she should instead accompany him to Dunbar Castle. While Mary's men complained and prepared to defend her, the queen seemed passive, allowing herself to be taken away from her capital. She went, as she said, "Rather than bloodshed and death should result". This passivity looked suspicious and indeed may have been. Many people considered that the queen, who was surprisingly thinly guarded, was complicit in her abduction. Since other members of her nobility certainly knew of the planned abduction in advance, it seems likely that Mary also knew - and approved - of the plan.

Mary rode meekly to Dunbar with Bothwell, after sending a member of her company to Edinburgh to warn the city of danger. When Mary's messenger reached her capital the alarm bell was rung and attempts were made to raise men to rescue her, but it was widely recognised that she was now in Bothwell's power.

Mary may have underestimated just what being in Bothwell's custody would mean. Although she most likely knew of the planned abduction in advance and consented, she certainly did not consent to the next element of the Earl's plan. According to Mary's own account, composed a few weeks later, she was conflicted in her feelings for



Mary seemed passive throughout the spring of 1567, allowing Bothwell to take control of both her person and her throne



Darnley's parents, who commissioned this memorial to their son, believed that Bothwell had killed him

Mary visited her son, James, before her abduction. She spent a day playing with her baby. She would never see him again



Bothwell since, "albeit we found his doings rude, yet were his words and answers gentle". Bothwell had no intention of letting Mary leave the castle without a certain guarantee of marriage. When persuasion failed to work, he took a more violent course, raping Mary.

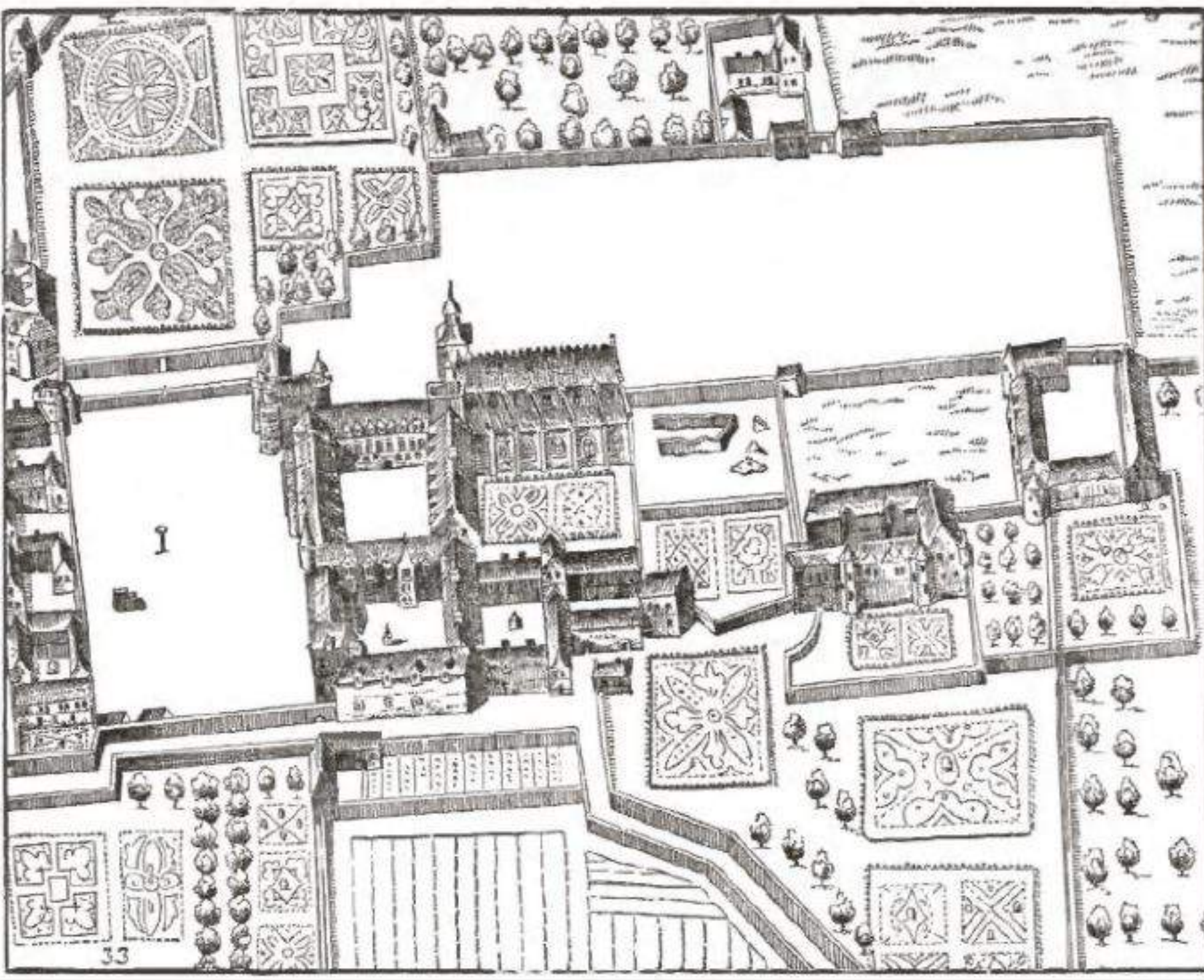
Although rape was a crime in the 16th century, it was also believed to dishonour the victim. Women were not expected to have any sexual intercourse outside marriage and if word had leaked out that Mary had - even without giving her consent - her reputation and standing as monarch would have been ruined. It was shameful to be a rape victim in the 16th century, with only a subsequent marriage to the perpetrator able to remove the stain.

This was, of course, recognised by contemporaries, including those around Mary. Maitland, who had accompanied Mary to Dunbar, himself noted that "the Queen could not but marry him, seeing he had ravished her and laid with her against her will". Mary might have consented to an abduction and even agreed to marry Bothwell, but she did not agree to such a rapid consummation. She was, however, powerless to defend herself in a castle filled with Bothwell's men.

Bothwell's actions placed Mary in an impossible position, since she had no choice but to press ahead with her marriage to a man widely believed to have murdered her husband. Mary herself does not seem to have been attracted to Bothwell, always maintaining that she married her third husband for political reasons. Bothwell, too, was certainly not in love with the queen, but he was determined to secure his position as royal consort.

With Mary in his possession and bound to marry him, Bothwell still had to overcome the problem of his marriage to Jean Gordon, which had been celebrated only two years before. Matters were, however, already in hand. On 24 April Bothwell's wife sought a divorce in the commissary court in Edinburgh on the grounds of her husband's adultery with a maidservant. Lady Bothwell, who was a friend of Mary's, probably did so at her husband's request. In her suit, she was successful. On 3 May the Protestant commissary court formally ended the marriage due to Bothwell's adultery while, a few days later, Bothwell was also granted an annulment from the Catholic church on the grounds of consanguinity. This was probably at the Catholic Mary's urging.

Absolutely certain now of success, Bothwell escorted Mary back to Edinburgh on 6 May. While Mary was welcomed to her capital with a salute from the castle guns, it was noted that Bothwell held the bridle of her horse, suggesting that she was still an unwilling captive. She once again appeared passive, ignoring the mounting anger



Holyrood Palace as it appeared in Mary's time. The palace was the scene of her unhappy third marriage

against the sudden elevation of Bothwell and refusing an offer, from some of her lords, that they should rescue her.

The idea that the queen meant to marry Bothwell was abhorred in her capital, particularly since her abduction and rape were widely known. On 9 May John Craig, who had been asked to proclaim the banns of marriage, complained to the Privy Council, recalling that "I laid to his charge, the law of adultery, the ordinance of the Kirk, the law of ravishing, the suspicion of collusion between him and his wife, the sudden divorcement, and proclaiming within the space of four days, and last the suspicion of the King's death which her marriage would confirm". Mary still took no heed, creating Bothwell Duke of Orkney and Marquess of Fife on 12 May.

Mary and Bothwell were married on 15 May 1567 in the great hall at Holyrood Palace. It was a Protestant ceremony, again demonstrating Mary's passivity, while there was little celebration arranged. Mary gave Bothwell no rich gifts, as she had previously done with Darnley, while she took no care over her clothes. The queen, too, seemed sad and distant at the ceremony and in the days that followed. James Melville, who had warned her against wedding Bothwell, claimed that she

Bothwell's end

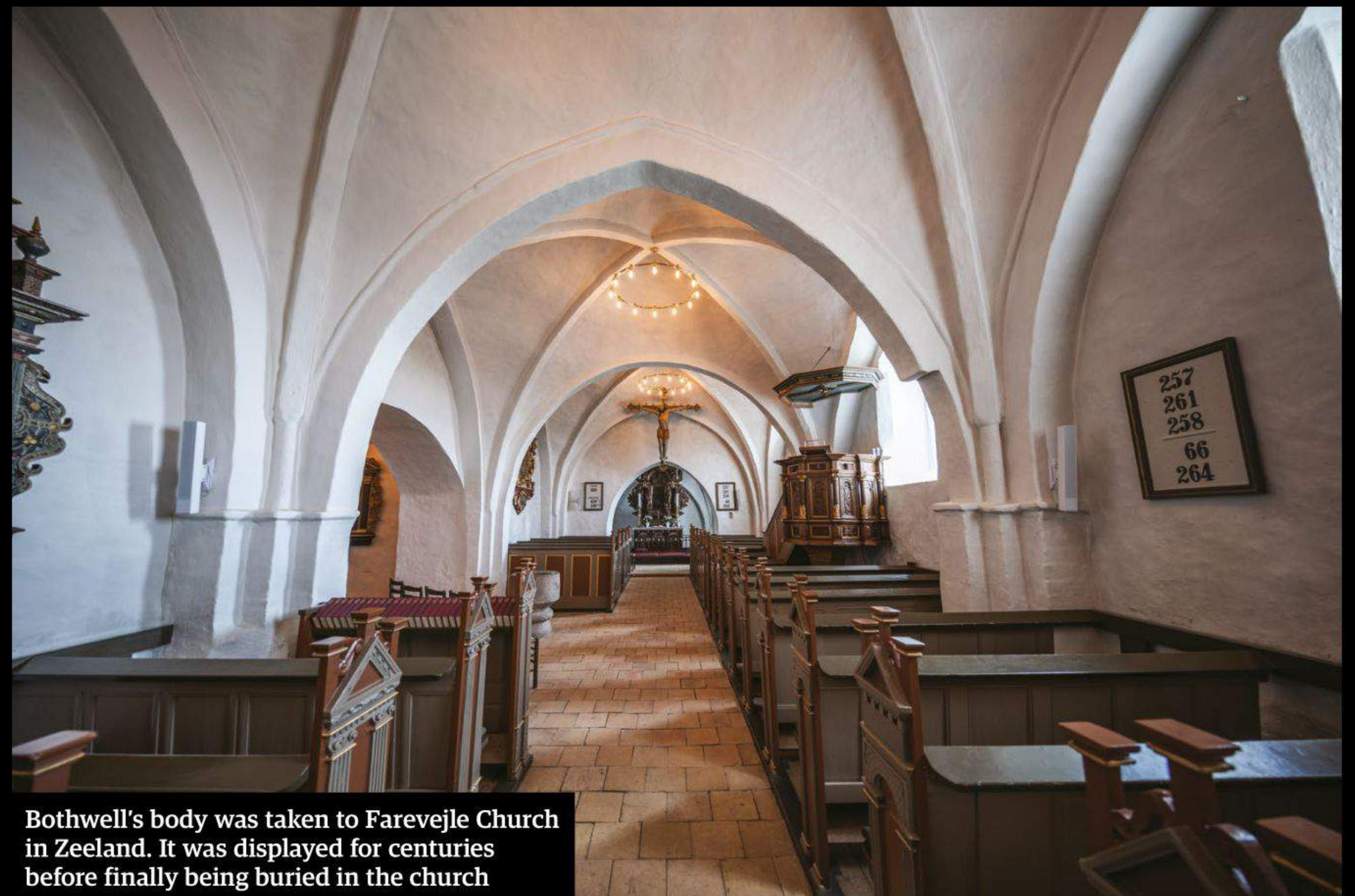
While Mary's ultimate fate was far from happy, her final husband endured a considerably more unpleasant end

Bothwell fled Scotland after Mary's fall from power. Travelling to Bergen, he was unfortunately to discover that his abandoned first wife, Anna Throndsen, was living there. On recognising her husband, she called for his arrest. Bothwell was taken to Copenhagen, where he was imprisoned.

The Scots were anxious to secure Bothwell's extradition, but it suited Frederick II to keep this important political prisoner in safely Denmark. In a bid to secure his freedom, Bothwell offered to return Shetland and Orkney to the Danish crown, something that could only be achieved if his wife was reinstated as queen of Scotland. Although

Mary made several attempts to annul her marriage over subsequent years, the couple remained married.

As it became clear that Bothwell had no prospect of returning to power in Scotland, he was treated more harshly. In June 1573, he was moved to Dragsholm Castle, where he was rumoured to have been chained to a pillar only half his height - something that meant he could not stand straight. Under such harsh treatment, Bothwell became insane, dying at Dragsholm on 14 April 1578. Even then, the indignities were not over for Bothwell. His mummified body was displayed in a local church until the late 20th century.



Bothwell's body was taken to Farevejle Church in Zealand. It was displayed for centuries before finally being buried in the church

"Bothwell's actions placed Mary in an impossible position, since she had no choice but to press ahead with her marriage"

threatened to either stab or drown herself the day after the ceremony.

Mary spent much time weeping in the days after the marriage, with it reported that her husband objected to her love of music and other pursuits. She was troubled, too, by the continuing presence of Bothwell's former wife at court, to whom he remained close. Now that he possessed her, Bothwell was not prepared to risk losing control.

The queen's chamber was guarded by his men, while Mary was permitted to conduct state business only in his presence. By 20 May there were reports that the distress had entirely altered her appearance and that she appeared in the midst of a breakdown. Any sympathy for the queen among her court and kingdom, however, was eking away.

Mary had consented to marry Bothwell in the vain hope that he would provide a protector in

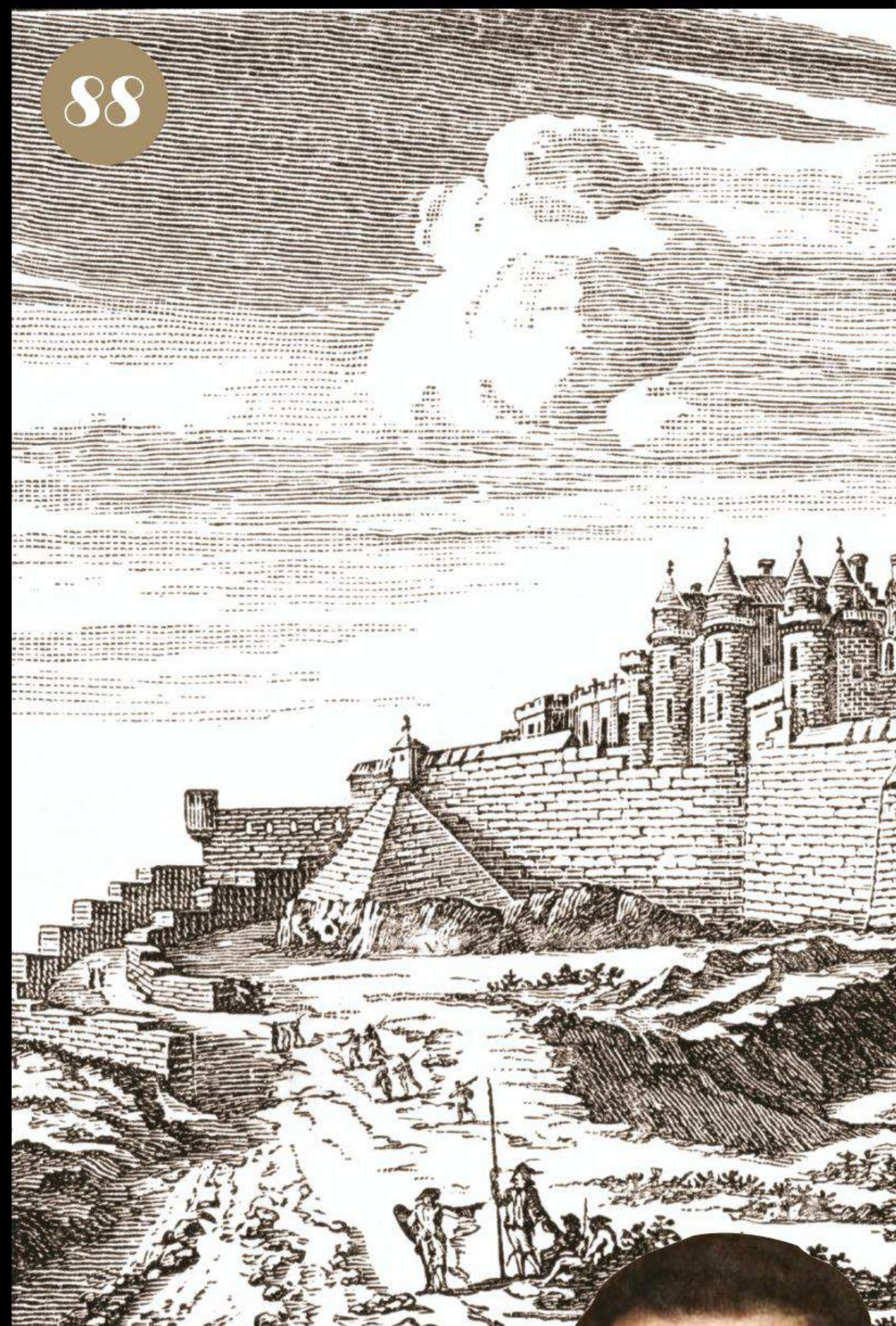
the turmoil that had engulfed her since Rizzio's death. Publicly, she claimed that she had married Bothwell due to his loyal service and at the request of her nobility. Yet, her subjects believed it was a match made of lust and brought to fruition by murder. Even the well-known fact of her rape and the impossibility of her position did little to win Mary any public sympathy: she was widely believed among her people to have consented to her abduction.

In choosing to marry the man believed to have murdered her previous husband, Mary destroyed any vestiges of her popularity in Scotland. Even as she made her wedding vows to Bothwell, Mary's reign was crumbling around her.

108



88



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Fight and flight

88 The rise of James VI
As Mary's life pursued its lamentable course, her crown passed to her infant son

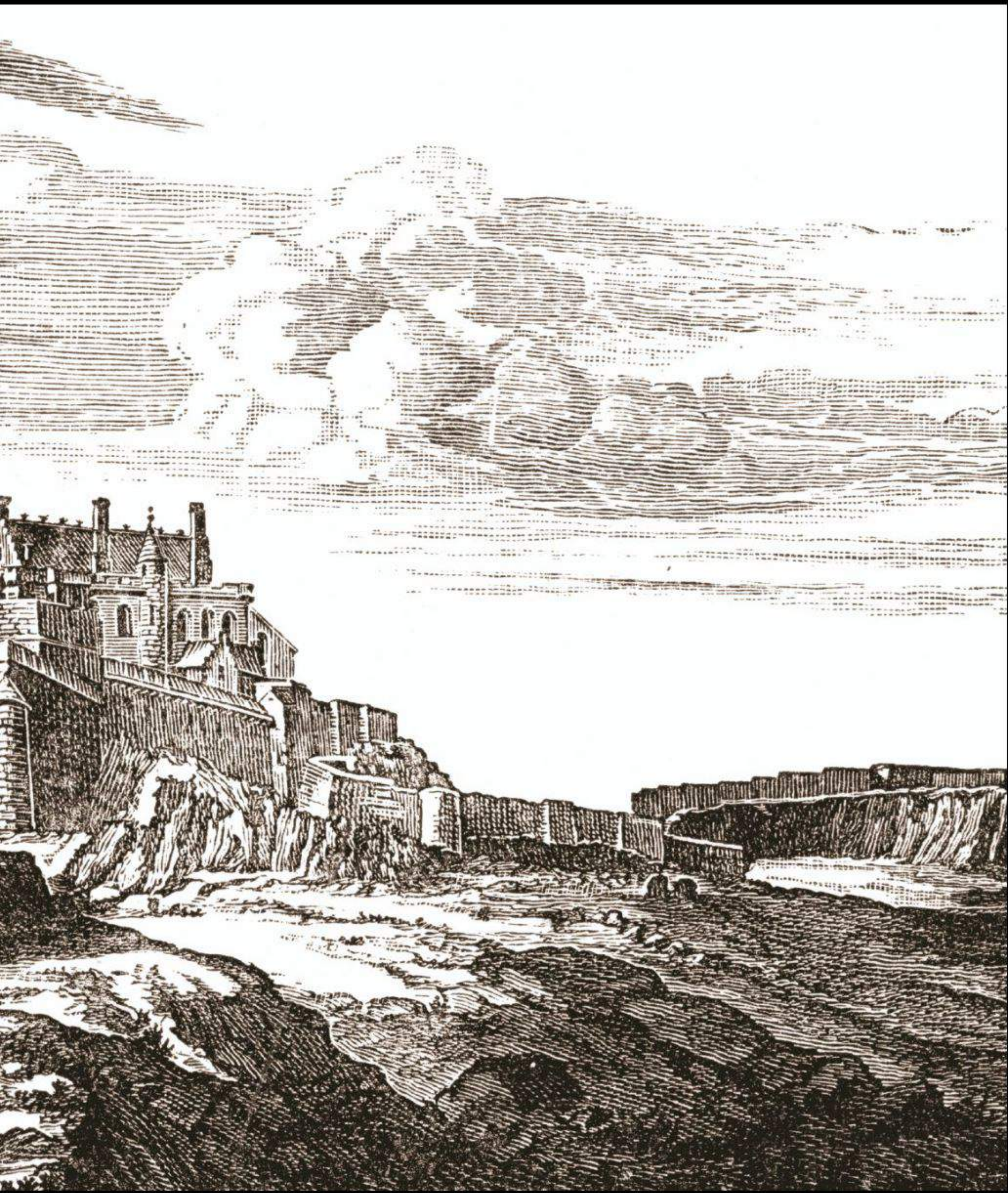
96 Escape from Lochleven
Whatever else can be laid against Mary Stuart, one thing is clear: she never gave up

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Mary was not prepared to bear her imprisonment meekly. When diplomacy failed, those around her turned to murder and treason

108 A queens' feud
The deadly rivalry between Elizabeth I and her scandalous cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots

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After spending almost five decades as queen, Elizabeth's reign came to an end and ushered in a new dynasty with James VI of Scotland at the helm

124 Legacy of a fallen queen
Mary's controversial life and reign are still debated to this day, four centuries after she lost her head



A romanticised scene depicting Mary with the Confederate Lords



The rise of James VI

As Mary's life pursued its lamentable course
her crown passed to her infant son

Words by Derek Wilson



Scotland being divided in factions as it is, cannot be contained in order unless our authority be assisted and set forth by the fortifications of a man." In these words

Queen Mary justified her marriage to Bothwell. Her reasoning was almost an affirmation of the preacher John Knox's assertion of the impossibility of female rule:

"To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation or city is repugnant to nature; contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to his revealed will and approved ordinance; and finally, it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice."

In a world ruled by men there was a certain grim realism about Mary's admission of inadequacy. It required a combination of political acumen and the skilful deployment of femininity displayed by such as Elizabeth I to survive in the maelstrom of 16th-century Europe. And such women were rare. Had Mary found a consort dedicated to supporting her and advising her she might have made a successful sovereign (the example of Victoria and Albert suggests itself). Instead she surrendered her mind as well as her body to James Hepburn,

Earl of Bothwell, a man who did not love her, nor respect her, nor possess the skills necessary for effective government; a man of evil temper, limited intelligence and driven only by personal ambition. Without trespassing too far on the expertise of the psychoanalyst we might observe that there are some women who like to be dominated, who admire masculine braggadocio and who seek the protection of strong partners. Mary was certainly in need of a formidable champion in a land sundered by new religious conflict as well as clan feuds that went back generations. Darnley living had made it difficult for Mary to rule with firmness and dignity. Darnley dead - and in such circumstances - made it impossible.

The marriage of the queen and Bothwell had several unfortunate consequences, but two of them were particularly significant and immediate. The first was that it alienated the Protestant lords who had been involved in or connived at the removal of Darnley. On 19 April, Bothwell tried to tie them to him even more firmly but achieved just the opposite effect. When he entertained them to supper at Ainslie's Tavern the document presented for their signatures required them to affirm that Bothwell had played no part in Darnley's murder and to advise Mary "...Weighing and considering the time present, and how our sovereign the Queen's Majesty is now destitute of a husband, in the which solitary state the commonwealth of this realm may

"In a world ruled by men there was a certain grim realism about Mary's admission of inadequacy"



A depiction of the scene at Carberry Hill

not permit her highness to continue and endure, but at some time her highness in appearance may be inclined to yield unto a marriage ... [it] may move her Majesty so far to humble herself, as preferring one of her native born subjects unto all foreign princes, to take to husband the said Earl of Bothwell."

In other words their lordships were to help Bothwell to the top of the ladder, while leaving themselves open to the possibility of future prosecution. Morton was one of only two who signed, while Maitland and others refused. Moray removed himself to France.

So much for the leaders of the Protestant faction. Mary's marriage to Bothwell also angered the Catholic section of the community. The parliament sitting in spring 1567 passed the Act Concerning Religion. Up to this point, the religious situation was clouded in uncertainty. Most Scots, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, held to the traditional Catholicism. The Reformation Parliament of 1560

had broken the nation's ties with the papacy and established Calvinist doctrine and worship, but implementation of change had been slow and patchy because of a shortage of ministers and resistance in certain areas. Mary had also cast doubt on the legality of the reforms by refusing to endorse the legislation. But, now, the new Act, sponsored by Bothwell, declared that Protestantism was the queen's official religion - even if she chose to indulge in Catholic worship. That set tongues wagging all over the country. It was confidently rumoured that the queen had converted. She was distraught. "I beg of you to speak well of me to His Holiness," she wrote to the papal nuncio. "Let no-one persuade him to the contrary concerning the devotion I have to die in the Catholic faith."

With his support evaporating Bothwell made haste to gain a divorce, before returning with Mary to Edinburgh from his castle at Dunbar in what was supposed to be a triumphal entry. It was not. The queen rode up to the castle with her fiancé leading

her horse by the bridle but they passed through crowds of silent citizens. When the minister at St Giles Kirk, John Craig, was ordered to publish the couple's banns of marriage he refused until threatened by Bothwell with dire consequences. On 11 May he denounced the 'adulterous' couple from his pulpit.

By now several Scottish nobles were joining with Bothwell's erstwhile co-conspirators. Calling themselves the Confederate Lords, they made their headquarters at Stirling. They pledged themselves to kill Bothwell, set Mary free and secure the safety of her young son. Back at Holyrood someone fixed a sign to the main gate:

*"As the common people say,
Only harlots marry in May."*

It took very little time for Mary to realise her real situation. Having gained his prize, her husband abandoned any pretence of love. He tried to usurp her royal status by issuing orders without consulting her. He indulged in uncontrollable



The Earl of Mar protected Prince James during his infancy, but later served as his regent before dying in 1572

“The Queen of England did not appreciate being addressed almost as an equal by an upstart Scottish earl”

outbursts of temper. On one occasion he would have throttled a member of the royal guard had the queen not intervened. The couple quarrelled frequently. To Mary it was all horribly familiar. In public she kept up a dignified front, attending court functions with her husband with every appearance of normality, but when she was not on display her abject misery was obvious to her attendants and confidants. Sir James Melville heard her threaten suicide and he reported that Bothwell's treatment caused the queen to shed “abundance of salt tears”. She was isolated in her own court by a consort who was suspicious and jealous of anyone to whom she showed affection. He, on the other hand, continued to visit his ex-wife. Isolated, bullied, having lost the affection of her people and with once-loyal subjects plotting rebellion, it is not to be wondered that the Queen of Scots longed for death.

Bothwell, assuming by the day ever more kingly powers, tried to make government policy. He courted the leaders of the Protestant Church. Mary had issued dispensations to various prominent Catholics to follow their own faith in private. At

a stroke the consort revoked these permissions. He summoned to his presence John Craig, the minister who had recently denounced him and promised him every support in his Protestant crusade. He corresponded personally with William Cecil and Elizabeth I assuring them of his friendly disposition, but any good such overtures might have achieved was negated by the tone he adopted. The Queen of England did not appreciate being addressed almost as an equal by an upstart Scottish earl. Alarmed at noble defections, Bothwell tried to force lords to attend court by introducing fines for non-attendance. Such desperate measures had the opposite effect. One of the last to defect and join the Confederate Lords was William Maitland.

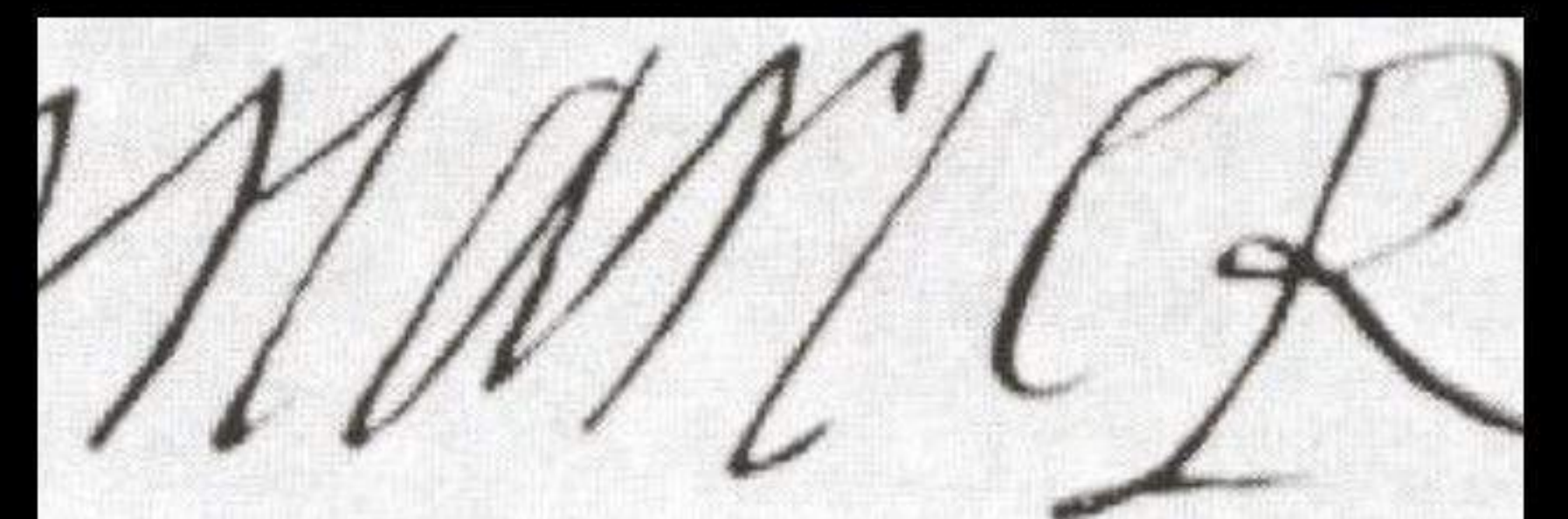
Meanwhile, it was vitally important to maintain the safety of the heir to the throne. Prince James's mother and her senior advisers shared a determination to keep him out of Bothwell's clutches. The future of the dynasty and the stability of the kingdom rested on the health and safety of a fragile baby only a few months old. Scotland had

The Casket Letters

**Factual evidence? Possibly.
Fake evidence? Probably. Fatal
evidence? Certainly...**

“It is reported that there were found in Bothwell's writing desk some letters written in the queen's own hand in which she exhorted Bothwell to accelerate the death of the king her husband. How true this may be, I know not.”

Sensational messages like this, written by the Bishop of London to a friend in Zurich, were flying all over Europe within weeks of Mary Stuart's abdication. They related to a casket containing eight letters and some poems reputedly written by Mary to her lover before Darnley's death. Mary insisted to Queen Elizabeth, “if any such writings be, they are false and feigned, forged and invented by themselves, only to my dishonour and slander”. Scholars have debated ever since whether the Casket Letters are genuine and what light they shed on the events of 1567. There is no doubt that parts of the letters are genuine and in Mary's own handwriting, but have they been doctored? Has someone done a ‘cut and paste’ job, re-arranging the material and incorporating cleverly forged passages? William Cecil, as ever maintaining a close watch on events north of the border, had his agents obtain copies. Once Mary had fled into England, he masterminded an enquiry into her implication in Darnley's murder based on investigation of the originals now conveniently made available by the pro-English regent, the Earl of Moray. Largely as a result of Elizabeth's intervention, the tribunal concluded, in December 1568, that the letters neither proved nor disproved the Queen of Scots' guilt. The investigation had been a farce because Cecil, no less than the Confederate Lords, was not interested in the truth. He wanted Mary out of the way and her claim to the English crown silenced. Moray and Co wanted the queen returned to face ‘justice’. Elizabeth, for her part, could not countenance a monarch being tried by her own subjects. The result was stalemate. The explosive Casket Letters had turned out to be a damp squib.



The genuine signature of Mary, Queen of Scots

been in this position before. Mary had inherited the crown soon after her birth, thus leaving effective power to be contested by her mother, Marie de Guise, and noble factions. The queen was anxious that history should not repeat itself. The man she instinctively turned to was John Erskine, Earl of Mar. He was a safe pair of hands – a Protestant but not a fanatic, a man of peace and unquestioned loyalty to the Stuart dynasty. He had held Edinburgh Castle for Marie de Guise during her struggle with rebel lords. Guardianship of royal infants had become something of a tradition in the Erskine family. Mar's father had looked after James V and Mary herself, who had both come to the throne as minors. Mar's wife, Annabelle, was a particular favourite of the queen. Mar had supported the Darnley marriage and, after Rizzio's murder, Mary had provided Prince James with a personal bodyguard of 500 musketeers and entrusted the child into Mar's hands. Now she did so again. On her instructions, he took the boy to Stirling Castle, a well-fortified palace that both James IV and V had lavished money on to create one of the finest royal palaces in Europe.

When Bothwell gained control of the queen Mar was faced with a dilemma. Was his responsibility, first and foremost, to Mary or to her son? He decided that the safety of the heir was of greater importance. He joined the Confederate Lords, who now gathered at the virtually impregnable Stirling Castle. With both sides recruiting support, a state of civil war now existed. On 6 June, Bothwell and Mary made a hurried flight from Holyrood to Borthwick Castle, some 21 kilometres (13 miles) to

the south. This was a stronghold where Bothwell planned to wait for reinforcements. Four days later the Confederate Lords launched a surprise attack. Bothwell fled to his stronghold at Haddington, whereupon the Lords rode on to Edinburgh and took possession of the capital. Mary was then able to leave Borthwick in disguise to meet up with her husband, who lodged her at Dunbar.

Both sides now made public statements to vindicate their actions and to attract support. The Lords denounced Bothwell in ringing terms as one who "having already murdered the king", was "now attempting by his gathering together of forces to murder the young prince also". They called upon all loyal subjects to "take revenge on the Earl Bothwell" and deliver the queen from his clutches. It might have been thought that Mary would have grabbed her opportunity to escape from her loveless marriage. In fact, she threw herself into the fray against her "rebellious subjects". There has always been speculation about the queen's motivation during this crisis. She aggressively supported her husband and railed against his enemies in vigorous and sometimes vulgar language. Only days before she had longed for death to deliver her from her husband. Now, she insisted that her dearest wish was to live a long, married life with her spouse. When she weighed the treason of her rebellious lords against Bothwell's appalling treatment of her she apparently considered it the greater sin. Did she consider that her prime duty was the preservation of the monarchy? Did she doubt that, without Bothwell's protection, she would enjoy the respect due to her royal person? Or should we conclude

Mary and Bothwell in Langside

"They called upon all loyal subjects to 'take revenge on the Earl Bothwell' and deliver the queen from his clutches"



The Earl of Mar's residence in Stirling



that the stresses of the situation, which forced her to choose between two abhorrent alternatives, deprived her of the ability to think clearly? Whatever the truth of the matter, Mary issued forth from Dunbar, booted and spurred in man's attire, ordering all loyal subjects to come to Musselburgh, where she raised her standard.

So it was that, on 15 June, two armies of roughly equal size, neither of which wanted a battle, converged on Carberry Hill and, once there, did not fight a battle. Bothwell established his camp on the flank of the long hill. When the Confederate Lords arrived they positioned themselves on rising ground opposite with the valley of Bellyford Burn between the two armies. The sun of a hot summer's day rose higher as the rival forces watched each other. And then? Nothing. Neither side was eager to begin the action. The troops suffered increasingly from thirst as the day wore on. Many of their captains were unsure about precisely what they were fighting for. They did not want to be seen to be taking arms against their anointed sovereign. Some of their opposite numbers were ready to fight for the queen but not for Bothwell. Eventually, the French ambassador offered his services as negotiator. The end of hours of toing and froing resulted in an ultimatum from

the Lords: Mary could agree to divorce Bothwell and send him away or Bothwell could settle the matter forthwith in single combat with a champion of their own choosing. Bothwell accepted the challenge. He was an excellent swordsman and might well have triumphed if he had followed through on the offer. However, when the Lords put forward combatants to face him, he turned them down, one after another. When, at last, an opponent was accepted by Bothwell, Mary forbade the fight.

Evening was drawing in. Many of the queen's forces, now desperately thirsty, were drifting away from Carberry Hill. The leaders continued to talk. Accounts differ about what was offered, what demanded, what agreed. All that is clear is that the depleted royal army was unable or unwilling to engage. To end the stand-off Bothwell was allowed to leave, under safe conduct. Mary watched her husband's galloping horse until it was out of sight. Then she handed herself over to the Confederate Lords, who promised to treat her with the full honours to which she was due in return for full pardon for their behaviour. Neither side stuck to the bargain. As Mary was led back to Holyrood, crowds, stirred by the Lords, shouted out "Witch! Murderess! Burn the whore!" For her part, the queen openly announced her intention to be revenged.

James Stewart, Earl of Moray

Was Mary's closest relative friend or foe?

Moray, one of the many illegitimate children of James V, was 30 years old when his 19-year-old half-sister returned from France. He was tall, athletic, intelligent, well-educated and taciturn. It seemed unlikely that he and the new queen would be able to work together. Moray was Protestant and a devotee of the fiery Calvinist, John Knox. He was pro-English and anti-French.



The Earl of Moray served as regent for James VI

He was a leader of the Lords of the Congregation, the Protestant nobles who had opposed the regency of Marie de Guise, the queen's mother. However, one of his dominant characteristics was loyalty and Moray deemed it his duty to support the anointed queen. As a member of the privy council he offered sage advice and good counsel. As early as 1562 he made a sound assessment of the troublemaker, Earl Bothwell, who had been involved in various affrays. Moray engineered his arrest and subsequently forced him to leave the country. From the start Mary liked and trusted him. Their falling out began over the Darnley marriage which Moray opposed, largely because of Darnley's set opposition to Protestantism. Thus estranged from the queen, he spent some months in England.

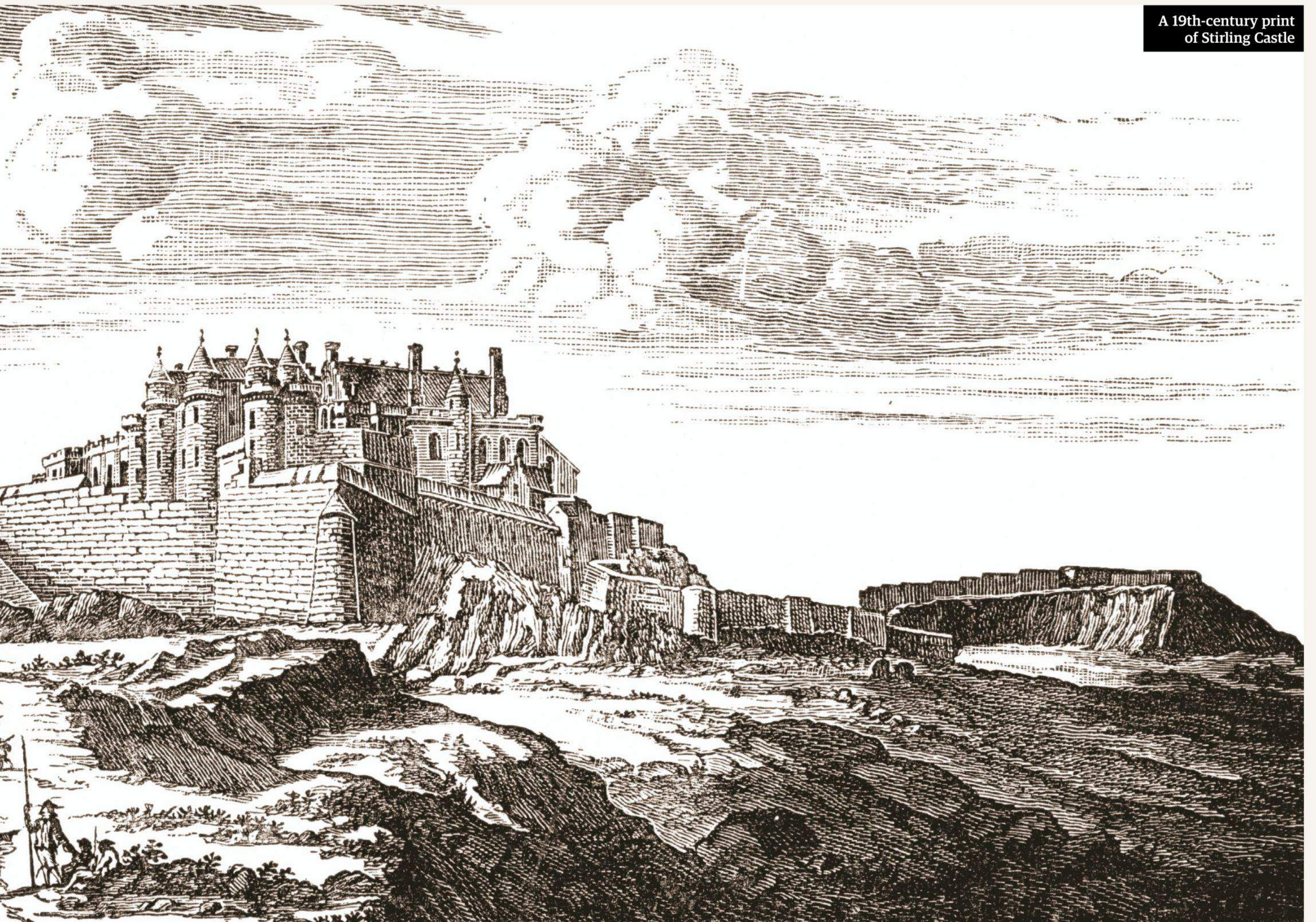
However much he knew about the plot against Darnley, Moray distanced himself from the murder by travelling to France. He did not return until after his half-sister's abdication. With the backing of the English government, he became Regent of Scotland in August 1567 despite the fact that the country was torn apart by civil war. Moray filled the office for the remaining two-and-a-half years of his life with such firmness and resolve that men called him the 'good regent'.



As soon as darkness fell on that short summer night, Mary was secretly whisked away from Edinburgh. She was ferried across the Firth of Forth and conveyed from thence to Lochleven. In the early light of 17 June she was rowed to the island in the middle of the loch and lodged in its secure castle. Having been freed from Bothwell (soon on his way to permanent exile in Scandinavia), she was now the captive of Bothwell's enemies. The Confederate Lords now held all the cards but Mary played her poor hand to the very last. She refused to divorce Bothwell and used all her wiles to plot her escape. In late July she was charged with complicity in Darnley's murder on the basis of newly discovered evidence (the Casket Letters). Her captors offered her a stark choice: face a public trial or abdicate. She chose the latter.

The one-year-old child who now became King of Scotland inherited a divided nation. As well as religious divisions, and clan feuds, there were those who wanted to see his mother reinstated. Some of the political leaders looked to France and others to England as the nation's obvious ally. As for the

A 19th-century print of Stirling Castle



little king, much would depend on the influences brought to bear by those entrusted with his upbringing. Could he be brought up independent of noble factions, a monarch untainted by scandal and able to rule firmly with the respect of his people? It must be said that the fate of the four regents who governed in his name from 1567 to 1578 did little to suggest the advent of a peaceful reign.

James Stewart, Earl of Moray, James VI's closest relative, had manoeuvred his way skilfully through the recent crises. His political instinct was acute and he had the support of the English government. He had turned against Mary, not out of personal ambition, but because his loyalty to the royal house rose above his duty to a queen who had, in his view, forfeited the right to rule. He suppressed

Mary's comeback attempt in 1568 and spent much of the following year pacifying the country. Inevitably he made enemies. In January 1570, one of them, James Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh, shot him dead as he was riding through Linlithgow.

Mary now pressed for the appointment of Darnley's father (and, therefore, King James's grandfather) the Earl of Lennox. He was the least effective of the early regents, though he scarcely had time to make much impact. He was killed in a brawl after only a year in office.

The Earl of Mar, James's guardian, who now took over as regent, also had a short term of office. He made it his aim to reconcile the feuding nobles. In October 1572, in pursuance of this policy, he visited James Douglas, Earl of Morton. According to one

contemporary, "he was nobly treated by the Lord Morton; shortly after which he took a vehement sickness, which caused him to ride suddenly to Stirling where he died, regretted by many". But not, apparently, by Morton, who now took over as regent. Inevitably, poison was suspected.

Morton continued the pacification of the country, by a combination of military force and negotiation with Mary's supporters. In 1573, he captured Edinburgh Castle, the last major stronghold of Mary's supporters. But Morton, too, fell foul of powerful forces. As well as the Catholic nobility, he had to contend with extreme Protestants. In March 1578 he was forced to resign and the 11-year-old king declared his intention to rule in person. Morton quickly staged a comeback but 18 months later the council formally declared that King James had reached his majority. Soon after this, the Kirk o' Fields murder was brought up again and Morton was charged with complicity. He was found guilty and executed in June 1581. Thus, after more than 14 years, the sordid saga of intrigue, assassination and civil war came to an end.

"In March 1578 Morton was forced to resign and the 11-year-old king declared his intention to rule in person"

Escape from Lochleven

Whatever else can be laid against Mary Stuart, one thing is clear: she never gave up

Words by Derek Wilson



ary's story, and particularly her escape from Lochleven, reads so much like romantic fiction that it is not surprising that it has inspired, over the centuries,

numerous novelists to turn it into just that – romantic fiction, replete with tragic heroine and black-hearted villains. If we want to understand, as best we can, the events of June 1567 to May 1568 we must hold our emotions in check, set the known facts against their political and religious background and explore objectively the motivation of all the major players. Like so much else in the queen's life, the sequence of adventures and misadventures that brought her, eventually, to perpetual imprisonment in England was a complex entanglement of actions set in train by people who had at heart the best interests of Scotland – or who persuaded themselves that they had those interests at heart. We must listen to claims made by the rival parties, acknowledge that we do not possess all the relevant facts, and eventually make our judgement based on the facts we do know.

Fundamentally, the conflict was less about personalities and gender and more about politico-religious principles. Anyone involved in government in 16th-century Europe took it as axiomatic that political power rested on a triangular relationship – God, monarch, people. What they disagreed about was exactly how that relationship

played out in practice. For Mary – as for Elizabeth in England – monarchs were God's deputies, installed by him and endowed with divine authority. It was not for subjects to question any royal mandate. To do so was rebellion and that was not only a crime, it was a sin. No-one 500 years ago opposed this concept in principle; no political viewpoint was proposed that we would today call democratic, based on the belief that power resides in the people. When popular leaders opposed tyranny, as some occasionally did, it was in the conviction that if rulers abused their power they, thereby, forfeited their claim to be divine representatives. A further complication arose when the only heir to the crown was female. In some countries, especially France, Salic law prevailed, which specifically excluded women from royal succession. John Knox, the Calvinist 'apostle' to Scotland, gave this principle biblical sanction when he declared roundly that to promote a woman to the throne was, "contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to his revealed will". There was a certain practicality in support of this view. One responsibility of a king was, when necessary, to lead his nation's forces into battle, a role women could not fulfil. When, in 1588 Elizabeth I faced the threat of Spanish invasion she appeared in part armour before her troops at Tilbury and made her famous speech about having the body of a "weak and feeble woman" but the "heart and stomach of a king".

There was also the fact, particularly relevant in Mary's case, that an unmarried queen was a prey to ambitious pursuit by men who would be king. This could make the crown a pawn played for by

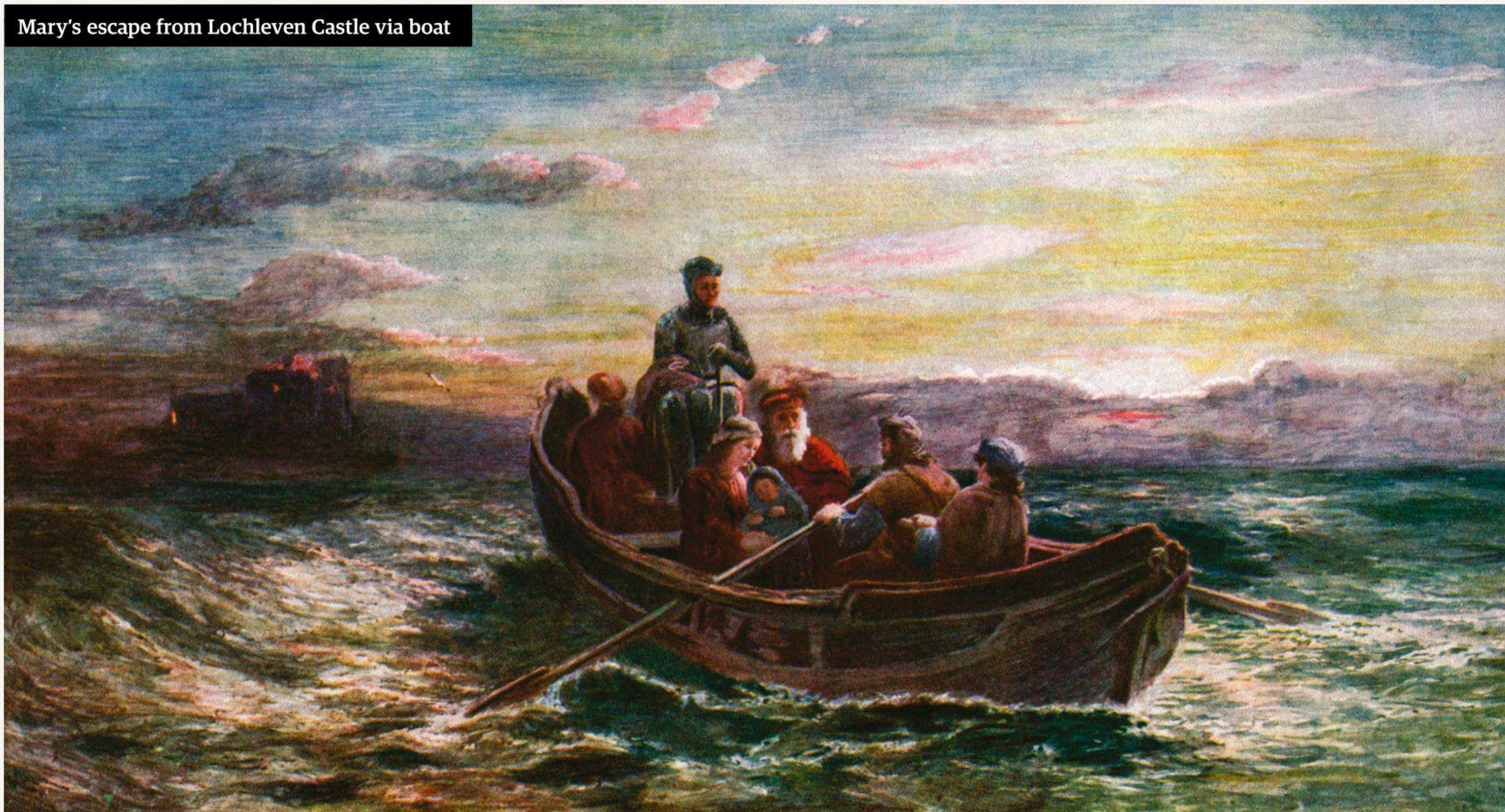


Mary, Queen of Scots is aided in her escape from Lochleven Castle



Fight and flight

Mary's escape from Lochleven Castle via boat



rival noble families or foreign dynasties. Elizabeth Tudor faced up to this problem and resolved on the solution of perpetual virginity. Mary Stuart could not, or would not, walk that particular plank. This, inevitably, involved her in the open feuds, which were an integral part of Scottish politics. The murders of Rizzio and Darnley and the complex relationships of the Confederate Lords must be seen as episodes in the ongoing bloody family conflicts over land, inheritance and, increasingly, religion which were the reality of Scottish history. For example, only four years after the atrocity at Kirk o' Fields, the Earl of Cassilis, in the course of a territorial dispute with Allan Stewart of Crossraguel, took the said Stewart prisoner and roasted him on a spit before an open fire until he signed away his rights to the land. Significantly, Stewart cried out in his pain, "will you not put a barrel of powder under me rather than use me in this

"It could be argued that the birth of a healthy son in June 1566 had been Mary's greatest misfortune"

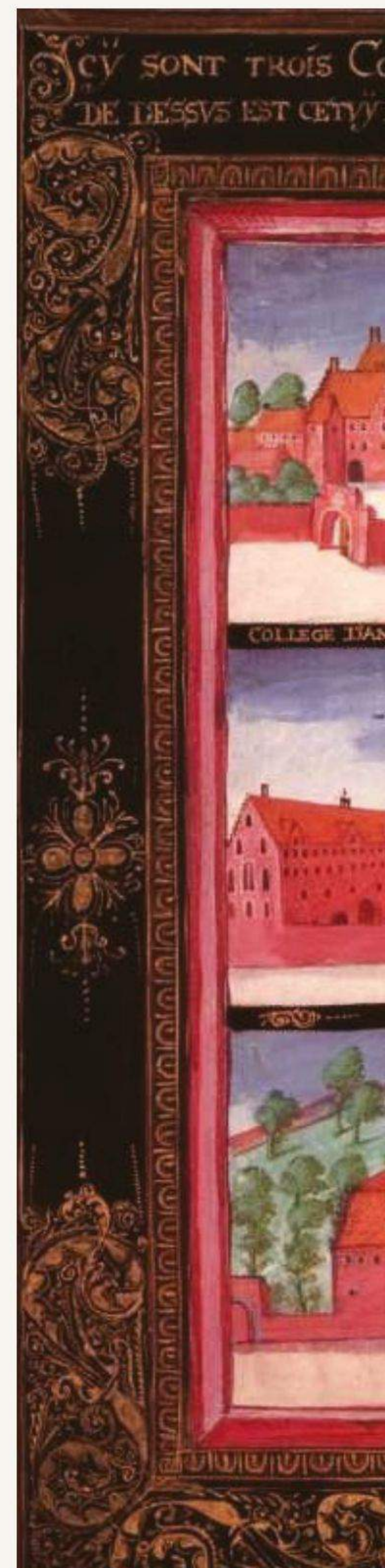
unmerciful manner?" It is against such a background of lawlessness and violence that we must see the treatment of Mary and her response. The queen's sufferings were appalling but they were far from unique. As a contemporary chronicler stated, "In that time God was despised and lawful authority was held in contempt in Scotland".

Mary was incarcerated at Lochleven on 17 June 1567 in sparse accommodation that certainly bore no relation to the honourable treatment she had been promised. The Confederate Lords justified their deposition of the queen on the grounds of her immoral conduct. She was accused of adultery with Bothwell and complicity in Darnley's assassination. Clearly such a person could not claim to be God's anointed monarch. The prisoner was, at the time, pregnant and scarcely in the best state of mind to take stock of her situation. In the third week of July she miscarried twins. Not waiting for her to recover, on 24 July her captors demanded her signature on documents announcing her abdication and appointing her half-brother, Earl of Moray, as regent during the minority of James VI. It could be argued that the birth of a healthy son in June 1566 had been Mary's greatest misfortune. Had there been no legitimate heir, getting rid of the queen would have posed problems for the rebels, who would, in all likelihood have fallen out

among themselves. Now, they had a child king they could mould to their liking. Moray, who had avoided implication in the coup by being in France, hurried home to take up his new responsibilities and to face Mary.

Theirs had been a rollercoaster relationship, veering between sibling affection and profound mistrust. By now, each knew how to handle the other. Moray wooed his half-sister with promises of better treatment. She responded with a duplicitous show of acquiescence. Mary agreed wholeheartedly to Moray's assumption of the regency on 22 August. Over the ensuing months the ex-queen became a model guest, getting to know all the members of the household, sharing meals, gossiping, playing cards and sewing with the ladies, flirting outrageously with the men. She was allowed a small personal staff, including the ever-faithful, 25-year-old Mary Seton. As the first, traumatic period of the queen's captivity gradually gave way to a familiar domestic routine the guardians' vigilance relaxed. By the following spring Mary was ready to make a bid for freedom.

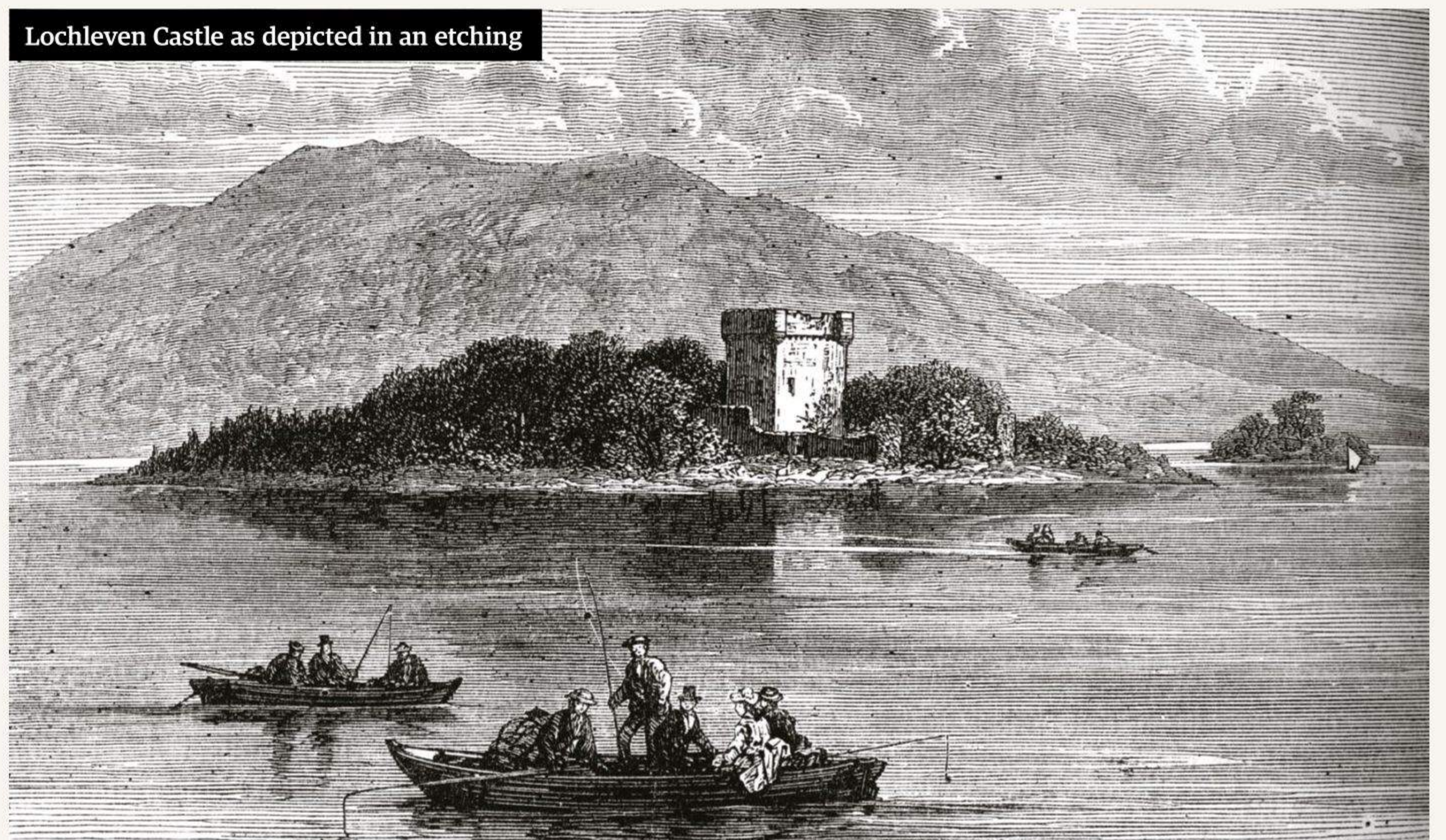
She had won the hearts of two members of the kindred of Lord of William Douglas, the Lord of Lochleven. George Douglas was William's younger brother and 16-year-old Willie Douglas was probably



Elizabeth I struggled to manage the problem of Mary, Queen of Scots



The colleges at Douai, set up to train priests to spearhead a Catholic rebellion in England



Lochleven Castle as depicted in an etching

the laird's illegitimate son. A plot was hatched in March 1568 to spirit Mary by boat from the castle, disguised as a washerwoman. The ill-conceived plot failed when one of the boatmen (who were not privy to it) recognised her and set her back on the island. This should have alerted the queen's guardians to be more vigilant but it seems that the boatmen did not report the escapade. Though they were not prepared to face the fury of the Lord of Lochleven, they were sufficiently sympathetic to Mary to keep her secret.

The next escape bid on 2 May 1568 was planned in much more careful detail. George, Willie and Mary Seton all had their parts to play and this time all went like clockwork. Mary Seton and her mistress changed clothes. Willie Douglas sabotaged all the boats, except one. As dusk fell he appropriated the key to the main gate. When all

the family were at supper he alerted Mary in her tower. She came down while her 'double' appeared at an upper window and Willie rowed her to the mainland in the only good boat. There George Douglas met them with three of his brother's best horses. By the next day Mary was in Hamilton, sending messages to her supporters to assemble with all the armed men they could collect. Initially all went well. Several lords were appalled at the way Mary had been treated and came over to her side, bringing over 5,000 men with them. Mary proposed to progress through the country gathering yet more support before confronting her enemies. However, Moray moved swiftly and forced an engagement at Langside, south of Glasgow, on 13 May. Mary still had the numerical advantage and should have carried the day. The weak point in her strategy was her dependence



A view over the Solway Firth, where Mary, Queen of Scots paid a fisherman to sail her over to England

upon her commander-in-chief, Archibald Campbell, Earl of Argyll, the most powerful landholder in the Highlands, second in prestige and authority only to Moray, whose ally he had long been. He had been involved with the Confederate Lords in the action against Rizzio, Darnley and Bothwell but he broke with his allies over the deposition of the queen. It may be that he trusted too much in his superior numbers or, as has been suggested by some, that he fell ill on the critical day. Moray, by contrast, acted with the vigour of a desperate man. He knew that if he failed he could not hope for any mercy from Mary. For whatever reason, the Battle of Langside was a brief affair and a complete triumph for the regent.

Watching from a nearby hill, Mary saw her troops fleeing and followed suit. She turned southwards and rode hard. By covering long distances and hiding at night she reached the Solway Firth by the afternoon of 16 May and hired a fishing boat to carry her across to England. Undoubtedly, she hoped that her absence from Scotland would be brief and that Elizabeth I would help her regain her throne, but the decision, made in haste, was disastrous for her cause. Mary had never had a talent for political calculation. By leaving Scotland she deprived her followers of a figurehead to whom they could rally. And if she believed the English queen would come to her aid she totally misread Elizabeth's perception of international affairs.

The action now shifts to the English court where Mary's destiny was decided. Elizabeth was not unsympathetic to the other queen's plight. She was

incensed about the rebellion of the Confederate Lords. But when it came to offering help to the exiled monarch there were other political factors to be taken into consideration. The problem represented by Scotland was the same as it had been during the reigns of Henry VIII and his ancestors as far back as Edward I (1239-1307): the need for a friendly and peaceable northern neighbour that would recognise England's overlordship and not provide a bridgehead for France or any other hostile nation. The Reformation added another vital factor; it was necessary that Scotland should be and remain Protestant. Mary was Catholic. What would her religious policy be if she were restored to her throne? There was also the little matter of her involvement in Darnley's murder (as claimed by the Confederate Lords) to be taken into account. In long explanations sent earlier via private messengers, in which she had, in places, been economical with the truth, Mary had tried to explain that she was innocent of her second husband's (Darnley's) death



Pope Pius V issued a papal bull that relieved any Catholics in England of their loyalty to Queen Elizabeth I

and that she had known nothing of her third husband's (Bothwell's) implication therein until after their marriage. It was not the sort of case that could be easily defended in a court of law. Elizabeth's dilemma was acute and easily stated. If, with military aid, she helped Mary defeat her rebellious subjects she would intensify the civil war north of the border and would be seen as

supporting a Catholic regime. If she sent Mary home, this, too, would provoke more disorder and might lead to the queen's capture and death. If she stood aside and left Moray to sort out Scotland's problems, she would be seen to be comforting rebels. And there was another factor to be taken into account - Elizabeth's council. The majority, of whom William Cecil was the spokesman, saw the 'Scottish problem' as one aspect of the international struggle between Catholic and Protestant forces. England had enemies within and without. Only the Channel separated England from the Catholic superpowers of France and the

A gem among the coals

The story of Mary Seton's long and faithful life

From the Mary, Queen of Scots' saga very few characters emerge with much credit. It is a story of brutality, lies, selfishness, betrayal, corruption and cynical intrigue of diabolical proportions. It is, therefore, a relief to discover among the sordid dramatis personae a woman who devoted the best years of her life to the selfless service of her royal mistress. Mary Seton was about eight years old when she was chosen by Marie de Guise to be a lady-in-waiting to her daughter, the young Queen of Scots. The two girls were of the same age. They were also similar in having a Scottish father and a French mother. Seton was one of four girls, all called Mary, who grew up as the bosom companions of the queen, sharing with her in study and in play. The other three eventually married but Mary Seton took a vow of celibacy and remained close to her mistress throughout the traumatic years that began with her marriage to Darnley and continued to her exile in England. Seton played a vital part in the ex-queen's escape from Lochleven Castle

and, subsequently, crossed the border with her. Thereafter, she enjoyed little contact with her own family and shared with her mistress the isolation at various 'secure residences' in England. At one stage Seton received an offer of marriage from Andrew Beaton, the leader of the ex-queen's small band of personal servants. Only that old vow of celibacy prevented the marriage and an annulment was sought. Sadly, this chance of connubial happiness was snatched away, for Beaton died before the vow was abrogated.

Mary Stuart and her devoted servant did eventually part company. In the mid 1580s Mary Seton returned to France to live in the convent of Saint-Pierre in Rheims, where Renée de Guise, the ex-queen's aunt was the abbess. It must have been a wrench for both women after some 35 years of daily intimacy. However, Mary Seton was spared the agony of being present at Mary, Queen of Scots' execution in 1587. She, herself, died in 1618.



A group portrait depicting George Seton, Mary Seton's grandfather, and his children



Mary signs her document of abdication at Lochleven Castle

Holy Roman Empire. Throughout the country Catholic 'recusants' defied the Elizabethan religious settlement by celebrating the mass in secret. In this very year, William Allen, an English exile, founded a college at Douai specifically to train priests who would return to England as a spearhead for the reconversion of the nation. Only months later the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland raised the standard of Catholic rebellion in the North. And in 1570 Pope Pius V issued the papal bull *Regnans in Excelsis*, relieving all English Catholics of their allegiance to Elizabeth. For Cecil and Co the proper response to the Scottish crisis was obvious: support for Moray and the Protestant regime.

When Elizabeth heard of Mary's forced abdication she was furious, turning on Cecil with a fury such as he had not experienced before. She demanded to know why he had not supported Mary through diplomatic channels. She even threatened to send an army across the border to remove Moray from power. When she calmed down she agreed with her minister on a face-saving exercise. Moray was to be summoned south to present his case against Mary. If she was found

innocent of Darnley's murder she would be restored to her throne with English support. If the verdict went the other way, the ex-queen would remain in exile. Mary refused to demean herself by appearing personally before a panel of English judges but agreed to be represented by her own advocates. The tribunal began on 4 October at York and was subsequently moved to Hampton Court.

The prosecution's case turned on the famous (or notorious) Casket Letters, supposedly written by Mary to Bothwell. Moray refused to produce the originals for the judges, offering only transcripts. When they insisted, the letters were displayed but only at a brief private meeting at which they could not be minutely scrutinised. This, of course, has a



Lochleven castle as it stands today

distinct odour of fish. As one of the judges pointed out, the letters were a two-edged sword. If they were accepted as true they would establish Mary's guilt. But, if not, suspicion would immediately fall upon those who had had the means and motive to tamper with them - Moray and his associates. This was not the outcome Cecil wanted and it explains why the tribunal's venue was changed to Hampton Court, where he could exercise more control. In fact, it was Queen Elizabeth who trumped the cards of all the other players. She declared the proceedings unsatisfactory, since they had neither proved nor disproved the case against the accused. The proceedings were adjourned - indefinitely.

Had anybody won? Moray failed to get rid of Mary but his de facto regency was recognised. Mary failed to regain her throne but she preserved her life and lived in reasonable comfort, cherishing dreams of one day returning to power. Cecil had inherited a headache in the form of an unwanted guest who became the focus of numerous Catholic plots. Perhaps it was Elizabeth, ever the master of fudge, who had some reason for satisfaction. She had avoided passing judgement on another anointed queen - and, for her, that was important.

"When Elizabeth heard of Mary's forced abdication she was furious, turning on Cecil with a fury such as he had not experienced before"



Elizabeth I, depicted presiding over parliament. The English queen faced pressing calls from the Commons to order Mary's execution

The Ridolfi Plot

Mary was not prepared to bear her imprisonment meekly. When diplomacy failed, those around her turned to murder and treason

Words by Elizabeth Norton



Years of imprisonment did nothing to dampen Mary's ambition or her hopes of release. As an unwilling guest in Elizabeth's England, she was always aware that she was just one heartbeat away from the English throne. Mary's position as hereditary heir

to the English crown was also well known to those around her, with some all too willing to help secure the accession of a Catholic queen. One such man was Roberto Ridolfi, a Florentine banker who lived in England.

The Rising of the Northern Earls had been an attempt by members of the northern nobility to replace Elizabeth with Mary in 1569. Its failure left the English government on high alert, searching for any further plotting associated with the Queen of Scots.

Elizabeth certainly believed that Mary was directly involved in the rising, although she was not able to bring herself to execute one of its leaders, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, who had hoped to become Mary's fourth husband. Norfolk - who was a cousin of the English queen through her mother - was fortunate that his kinswoman was squeamish in the face of shedding her family's blood. He was released from the Tower of London in August 1570 and was soon involved in a much more dangerous plot against his sovereign.

Although Norfolk's hopes of marriage to Mary had been dashed in 1569, he was still interested in wedding the former Queen of Scotland. Not long after his release from the Tower, he fell into the orbit of Roberto Ridolfi, a man with grand plans for the future of England.

Roberto Ridolfi had first arrived in England in around 1555. He was trusted by the English authorities, although his fervent Catholicism caused him to sympathise with Elizabeth's enemies. Ridolfi had been involved in the failed northern rising in 1569 when the English authorities had discovered that he was bringing bills of foreign exchange into the country for the Duke of Norfolk and John Leslie, Bishop of Ross.

As a wealthy foreigner, Ridolfi was leniently treated, spending only one month imprisoned in the home of Elizabeth's spymaster, Sir Francis Walsingham. Unbeknown to the authorities, he remained in contact with the Bishop of Ross, who was also a Catholic and was one of Mary's most staunch supporters. The bishop was then in London, still working hard for the cause of his exiled queen. By the start of the 1570s Ridolfi and the bishop had concluded that more direct action would be required on Mary's behalf.

Elizabeth had been excommunicated by Pope Pius V in 1570, a move which effectively released England's Catholics from any loyalty towards her and made her deposition a God-sanctioned goal for the holy. As a devout Catholic, Ridolfi judged



Pope Pius V entertained doubts about Mary's character, but was prepared to support her cause if it led to Elizabeth's deposition

that the moment was right to remove Elizabeth from her throne. He considered that this could only be done with the military support of Spain and, in March 1571, he left England to raise the support he required.

As a means of obtaining this, he carried a written statement, which he had reluctantly elicited from Norfolk, in which the duke declared that he was a Catholic and that he would lead a

revolt of English Catholics in the event that Philip offered Spanish aid. Norfolk wrote a letter to the pope, recommending Ridolfi to him as his envoy and empowering the Italian to negotiate with the pontiff on his behalf. He instructed Ridolfi that "you will also explain to the Pope and the Catholic King how well disposed and ready to act are the Catholics, who preponderate in numbers and power in this realm, and what an opportunity is now

"As a devout Catholic, Ridolfi judged that the moment was right to remove Elizabeth from her throne"

presented of bringing all the island back to the Catholic faith, and of espousing and furthering the just title of the Queen of Scotland”.

The fact that Mary's name was linked to the plot would always have been highly dangerous for her, even if she had not consented to it. She was still involved in negotiations with Elizabeth for support in returning her to the Scottish throne, receiving a personal visit from Elizabeth's chief minister, William Cecil, in October 1570 when they discussed terms for aid. She charmed him, with Cecil considering that “the Queen of Scots was of a clement and gentle nature, and was disposed to be governed by counsel of them in whom she reposed her trust”. She was also prepared to consider renouncing her claims to the English crown in return for the Scottish throne and even to allow her son, James, to be raised as a hostage in England.

However, while still prepared to negotiate, Mary was growing increasingly frustrated. In the spring of 1571 she wrote to the Earl of Sussex to complain of the plan to return her to Scotland, “which has been so many times delayed for every light matter that did occur, that we are for our own part in doubt if finally there shall be any good succeed unto us therein”. In any event, Scotland was not, necessarily, the chief prize towards which Mary aspired.

There is no doubt that, within a few months of her arrival in England, Mary had begun to focus her efforts on obtaining that kingdom rather than merely securing her reinstatement in Scotland. She had already informed the Spanish ambassador in January 1569 that “if his master will help me, I shall be Queen of England in three months, and mass shall be said all over the country”.

Although Mary had made no attempts to return Scotland to the Catholic Church during her personal rule in her kingdom, she was well aware that a return to Catholicism in England would be the price of Philip's support. Philip had, himself, briefly been king of England as the husband of Elizabeth's half-sister, Mary I. On her death, he had reluctantly proposed marriage to his sister-in-law in the hope that the kingdom would then remain Catholic. For Philip, the idea of a Catholic Queen of England was a tempting one although Mary's strong links to France gave him cause for concern.

Mary was widely believed to be plotting against Elizabeth in the early 1570s. Her brother-in-law, Charles IX of France, commented in 1572 that “the poor fool will never cease until she lose her head. In faith they will put her to death. I see it is her own fault and folly”. The Queen of Scots was almost certainly aware of Ridolfi's actions, just as she had approved the Rising of the Northern Earls. Certainly Norfolk, in the letter that Ridolfi carried with him to the continent, referred to the “particular instruction” that he believed the Italian had received from Mary herself.

There can be no doubt that Mary agreed with Ridolfi's aims. Indeed, a document exists – purporting to be from her – in which she also sent

The treasonous dukes of Norfolk

The Dukes of Norfolk had a history of treason and the fourth duke was no exception

Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk strayed perilously close to treason when he became involved with Mary, Queen of Scots. His family history meant he should have been more wary of the dangers of committing treason. His ancestor, John Howard, 1st Duke of Norfolk, died fighting for Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485, while his eldest son was imprisoned. Henry VII attainted both father and son for treason.

The second duke eventually regained his title, although two of his granddaughters – Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard – lost their heads after marrying Henry VIII. His son, the third

duke, although a longstanding royal official, only swerved execution when Henry VIII died before the sentence could be carried out. His son, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, was less fortunate. He was accused of adding the arms of Edward the Confessor to his own coat of arms and became Henry VIII's last victim.

The fourth duke was the beheaded Earl's son and grew up in the shadow of the axe. However, he would not be the last member of his family to suffer at the hands of the Tudor state. His heir, Philip Howard, would die in the Tower of London after refusing to renounce his Catholicism.



The fourth duke's father, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, was the last victim of Henry VIII's headsman

The Duke of Alba, who served as Philip of Spain's governor of the Netherlands, had no faith in Ridolfi



instructions to Ridolfi to present to the pope. In it, she spoke of the plight of the English Catholics and of her own miserable imprisonment, requesting aid to restore liberty to her co-religionists in England. She also requested that the pope agree to the annulment of her marriage to the Earl of Bothwell, while promising to send her son James to wed a Spanish princess. The original of this document no longer survives, but it was later quoted against her during the Duke of Norfolk's trial.

Ridolfi, who already had strong links to the papacy, was quickly able to obtain the pope's support. Pius V in any event favoured direct action against the heretical queen of England, even if there were still concerns about Mary, Queen of Scots' behaviour while in Scotland.

The main aim of the plot was to secure the invasion of England from the Spanish Netherlands, with the Duke of Alba, who controlled Philip's

forces there, to lead the assault. At the same time, the English Catholics - who were still a sizeable number - were expected to rise up. Faced with this double threat, Elizabeth would be murdered and Mary released from captivity. The former Queen of Scots would then be elevated to the English throne, alongside the Duke of Norfolk as her husband.

The plot relied heavily on the assumed support for Mary from the English Catholics, something which the Duke of Alba - for one - was highly dubious about. While Catholicism would increasingly come to be associated with treason as Elizabeth's reign progressed and Catholic worship was always illegal, the vast majority of her Catholic subjects were loyal to their sovereign. Following Ridolfi's arrival in the Netherlands, Alba had serious doubts. He recommended to his master that an invasion only be mounted if the English Catholics would rise and hold out against their monarch's

forces for 40 days. He also privately told Philip that he considered Ridolfi to be a lightweight and that he doubted the Italian's ability to carry out the ambitious plot.

Ridolfi was not, in any event, to get the chance to prove his mettle. Word had already begun to leak back to England by the late spring, with Elizabeth receiving a private warning from the Grand Duke of Tuscany. On 12 April 1571 Charles Bailly, who was a Scottish servant of the Bishop of Ross, was arrested by the English authorities at Dover after sailing from the Netherlands. On his person, several incriminating books and letters were found, including correspondence addressed to his master from Ridolfi, which discussed the plan to assassinate Elizabeth and invade England.

It was, of course, immediately obvious to the English authorities that any plot that involved the Bishop of Ross also concerned the Queen of Scots. The bishop had hitherto been staunchly loyal to his sovereign and was then still acting as her personal ambassador in England. He was highly energetic on her behalf, sending her regular news bulletins, but he was also tactless. It did not help his queen's cause when, in 1569, while in London, he published the 'Defence of the Honour of Queen Mary', which once again asserted her rights to the English succession. Nonetheless, this rash and impulsive churchman was unfortunately Mary's main window to the outside world during the early years of her captivity.

Following his arrest, Charles Bailly was immediately sent to the Marshalsea Prison in London and kept under a close watch on the orders of William Cecil. On being threatened with torture, he soon capitulated and revealed the plot to the authorities.

At the same time, the English government sought to prove Norfolk's connection with the plot, with it soon discovered that he was sending money to Mary's supporters in Scotland. He was arrested on 7 September and sent to the Tower of London. The Bishop of Ross, too, was arrested and, on being threatened with torture, revealed what he knew of the plot and of Mary and Norfolk's involvement.

Abandoning his loyalty to Mary, he also claimed to believe that Norfolk would not survive long if he married the Scottish queen, since she had (he alleged improbably) poisoned Francis II of France, consented to Darnley's murder and then married Bothwell before attempting to have him murdered in turn. While this statement was elicited under threat of physical harm, it is a measure of the poor advisors that Mary had access to in the period. As the bishop's interrogator himself remarked, "Lord what a people are these, what a Queen, what an Ambassador".

At the same time the Bishop of Ross also wrote to Mary, admitting that he had confessed everything, but still requesting that she attempt to have him released. If that was not possible, he added, she could at least provide him with financial aid. He spent some years in prison in England, as did Charles Bailly. Roberto Ridolfi, who was in

"Abandoning his loyalty to Mary, he also claimed to believe that Norfolk would not survive long if he married her"



Norfolk was related to Elizabeth through her mother, but his involvement with Mary was treasonous

Paris when he learned of the plot's discovery, was more fortunate. Since he was beyond the reach of the English government, he was able to return to Florence where he lived out the rest of his long life in prosperity, dying in 1612.

Mary, who was, of course, already a prisoner, did not suffer immediate consequences following the plot's discovery. Her would-be husband, however, was not so fortunate. Norfolk was brought to trial in January 1572, accused of high treason. He was, of course, convicted. This time his royal kinswoman was prepared to show him no mercy and he was beheaded in June 1572. On hearing the news, Mary bewailed the loss of "her Norfolk", weeping and lamenting the fact that she had helped bring him to his ruin.

Mary must also have been aware that she had potentially brought about her own ruin. Although English popular opinion of her as a poor, dispossessed queen, had initially been relatively favourable, the discovery of the Ridolfi Plot changed how she was viewed. She was, as one member of parliament considered, a "monstrous dragon", while her Catholicism and her foreign connections were seen as highly dangerous to Elizabeth. There were many in England - most notably in the House of Commons - who pressed Elizabeth to send Mary to the block.

Elizabeth however, although she was wary of the "daughter of debate" as she termed the Scottish



Elizabeth I in around 1570. She was acutely aware of the personal danger she faced from Mary's supporters

"Mary did not suffer immediate consequences following the plot's discovery"



Mary depicted in 1578, a few years after Ridolfi's failure. She was fortunate to escape the plot's discovery with her head



Philip II of Spain wished to return England to Catholicism, but he doubted the wisdom of assisting Mary

as her own. Mary refused to recognise the commissioners' power to question her, since she was a foreign monarch, and instead insisted that she be brought before parliament to answer the charges.

Mary was, however, prepared to admit that she had been in contact with foreign powers, confirming that she had asked for help in obtaining her liberty and returning to her throne. She also admitted that she had been interested in marriage to Norfolk, considering that it was something desired by the people of England. She denied giving anything but a financial commission to Ridolfi as a banker.

The evidence against Mary - who was, of course, known to have strong links to the main conspirators - was damning. The House of Commons certainly thought so, with parliament seeking to bring a bill of attainder against her, which could have condemned her to death. Elizabeth remained in no mood to order the death of a fellow reigning queen and the best that could be passed was an

Act removing Mary from the English succession.

Mary survived the Ridolfi Plot, but her reputation and the way that she was perceived in England was considerably damaged. Far from a pitiable victim of misfortune, she came to be viewed as a foreigner bent on Elizabeth's death. The Ridolfi Plot was to be only the first treasonous scheme to which Mary's name would be directly linked in the years to come.

queen, was not prepared in 1572 to countenance calls for her execution. Mary was, like her, a crowned monarch, while she was also her closest living kinswoman.

She sent commissioners to Mary in the summer of 1572, accusing her of involvement in the Ridolfi Plot, approving Elizabeth's excommunication, communicating with foreign powers and of adopting the English royal arms

To kill a queen

Mary was far from the only person in England who wanted Elizabeth dead

The Ridolfi Plot was far from the only attempt on Elizabeth's life. Thomas Appletree shot at the queen's barge as she was rowed down the Thames in 1579. One of Elizabeth's bargemen was wounded, while another shot passed within six feet of the queen. Appletree insisted he had shot in error and was imprisoned.

A Welsh member of parliament, William Parry, made an attempt on Elizabeth's life in 1585. He considered assassinating her as she walked in her gardens, but lost his nerve. When the plot was discovered, the Catholic MP was sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered. Making a pun, the House of Commons, on hearing of this sentence, voted that he should be 'dismembered'.

Even those close to the queen were not above suspicion. Elizabeth's Jewish physician, Roderigo Lopez, was accused of plotting her murder. He had the misfortune to have obtained the displeasure of the influential Earl of Essex. Although the charges were widely recognised to be false, the queen still permitted his execution in 1594.

Many plots against Elizabeth's life involved English Catholics. A high proportion were also focused on securing the accession of Mary, Queen of Scots.



Elizabeth survived a dangerous early life to win the English crown. She was determined to keep her throne



Protestant Elizabeth feared plots and schemes to replace her on the English throne with the devout Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots

A queens' feud

The deadly rivalry between Elizabeth I and her scandalous cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots

Words by Jon Wright



In the parliament of 1586, Job Throckmorton, the MP for Warwick, launched a bilious attack on Mary Stuart.

She was, he bellowed, “such a creature whom no Christian eye can behold with patience, whose villainy hath stained the earth and

infected the air, the breath of whose malice towards the Church of God and the Lord’s anointed, our dread sovereign, hath in a loathsome kind of savour fumed up to the heavens.” Destroying Mary would be “one of the fairest riddances that ever the Church of God had” and Throckmorton called upon his fellow MPs to “be all joint suitors to her Majesty that Jezebel may live no longer.”

He was confident that no one would dare “stain his mouth in defence of [Mary],” and he was right. Mary, parliament explained, was “hardened in malice against your royal person, notwithstanding that you have done her all favour, mercy and kindness.” She was “greedy for your death and

preferreth it before her own life,” and who could be surprised after so many years striving “to ruin and overthrow the happy state and common weal of this most noble realm”?

The question we must ask is this: how had matters reached so intense a pitch that a queen was being asked to spill the royal blood of her cousin? Therein lies one of the the most poignant and befuddling Tudor tales.

The relationship between Mary Stuart and Elizabeth Tudor was always destined to be turbulent, and the royal succession carries most of the blame. At the outset of her reign, another Tudor parliament had petitioned Elizabeth to marry at her earliest convenience, a demand that she brushed off and declared that, for now at least, she would remain “in this kind of life in which I yet live.” If

marriage became a possibility, she would choose a candidate who had England’s best interests at heart, but “in the end, this shall be for me sufficient: that a marble stone shall declare that a queen having lived such a time, lived and died a virgin.” In 1559, almost everyone seemed to have assumed that this was a rhetorical flourish rather than a declaration of dynastic intent, but Elizabeth’s failure to find a husband became increasingly irksome. In fairness, any match would have been problematic. A foreign husband raised the spectre of unwelcome overseas interference in English affairs, and the realm had seen enough of that during the marriage of Mary Tudor and Philip II of Spain. It was also difficult to envision any home-grown husband of adequate stature or whose selection would not stir up rivalries within the English nobility.

“The relationship between Mary Stuart and Elizabeth Tudor was always destined to be turbulent”



The ruins of Lochleven Castle, the fortress in Scotland where Mary was held prisoner before her escape to England

For all that, many people opined that some solution would have been better than none and, as early as 1562, Bishop John Jewel of Salisbury captured the prevailing mood: "Oh how wretched are we who cannot tell under what sovereign we are to live." Marriage was not the only way to ease the nation's concerns, of course. A successor could be named and, back in the 1559 parliament, Elizabeth had promised to do precisely that "in convenient time". The only trouble was that the obvious candidate, Mary, Queen of Scots, was deeply controversial. Mary's claim was pristine. She was the daughter of James V of Scotland, the son of Henry VIII's sister, Margaret Tudor. Elizabeth's grandfather and Mary's great-grandfather were one and the same person: Henry VII. In simpler times, naming Mary as a successor would have been a relatively straightforward matter.

Mary had been born on 8 December 1542 and within just a few days, following the death of her father, she ascended the Scottish throne. In July 1543, one of the clauses of the Treaty of Greenwich mandated the betrothal of Mary and Henry VIII's son, Edward. However, the Scots quickly reneged and another Anglo-Scottish war ensued. Mary's marital future took an alternative course and, in July 1548, the Scottish parliament agreed to her betrothal to the French dauphin, Francis. Mary headed off to France in August and, after years at the French court, married Francis in April 1558.

Just a few months later in November, Mary Tudor died and many Catholic monarchs across Europe looked askance at the spectacle of Elizabeth, the daughter of the hated Anne Boleyn, ascending the English throne. Surely Mary, Queen of Scots - a woman of unquestionable Catholic sympathies - was a more legitimate monarch than Henry VIII's bastard daughter? In France, at any rate, the English royal arms were applied to Mary and when Henry II died in July 1559, Francis and Mary were able to style themselves the rulers of France, Scotland and England.

Such moves were more about bluster than anything else, but they were provocative and would not quickly be forgotten - like the glaring reality of Mary's Catholicism. This was deeply unpalatable to many in Elizabeth's regime, not least William Cecil,



Nicholas Hilliard's *The Pelican Portrait* portrayed Elizabeth I as the mother of the Church of England

The rise & fall of Mary

1542

A queen is born

Mary Stuart is born at Linlithgow Palace in West Lothian. Her father, James V, dies on 14 December and Mary succeeds him. Her coronation takes place on 9 September 1543.
8 December 1542

Betrothement

The treaty of Greenwich between England and Scotland is signed. Mary is to be betrothed to the future Edward VI. However, the Scots renege in December, provoking Anglo-Scottish war.
1 July 1543

Royal consent

The Scottish parliament agrees to Mary's betrothal to Francis, the Dauphin of France. Mary arrives in France nearly a month later on 13 August and begins a 13-year stay in the country.
7 July 1548

The marriage

Mary and Francis marry at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. On 17 November, Mary I of England dies in London and is succeeded by her younger sister, Elizabeth I.
24 April 1558



A young widow

Henri II of France dies in Paris. Francis and Mary become the rulers of France, but Francis dies on 5 December 1560 and Mary loses the crown to Charles IX and his mother, Catherine de' Medici.
10 July 1559

Mary and Elizabeth in culture

How have the queens been portrayed over time?

Portrayals of the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth, in both high art and popular culture, have rarely been overly concerned with historical accuracy. The two women never actually met in person, which is a nuisance for anyone interested in a dramatic storyline, so encounters have routinely been concocted from imagination.

It happens in Schiller's play *Maria Stuart*, and twice in the 1971 film *Mary, Queen of Scots*, starring Glenda Jackson as Elizabeth and Vanessa Redgrave in the title role. Martha Graham's 1985 dance piece *Episodes* saw the two queens strive to resolve their differences over a game of tennis but most of the fictitious meetings have tended towards the more passionate end of the spectrum. In Donizetti's opera *Maria Stuarda*, insults are

hurled with abandon and on one occasion this had regrettable results. The singer playing Mary aims harsh words at her rival: "Impure daughter of Anne Boleyn, do you speak of dishonour? Prostitute - unworthy and obscene, I blush for you. The throne of England is sullied by your feet, vile bastard!" During one early rehearsal, these lines were delivered with such gusto that the singer playing Elizabeth took personal offence and the two divas fell to blows.

Caricature is common, with Mary usually being positioned as either an innocent victim or a love-struck political pawn, but only an exceptional historical double-act could have managed to inspire artists as diverse as Robert Schumann, Lou Reed and Liz Lochhead.



who would dedicate great energies to destroying Mary. It was all too obvious that many Catholic European rulers perceived Mary as not so much a worthy successor, but as an ideal replacement. For Philip II of Spain, Mary would always be "the gate by which religion must enter the realm of England."

Needless to say, the notion of naming Mary as Elizabeth's successor was, from the outset, deemed to be perilous, but this did not make it impossible. After her husband's death in December 1560, Mary returned to Scotland and, as well as coping with the pressures of a Protestant regime and a fractious nobility, made her case to the English government. In a letter written in 1566, Mary urged Elizabeth's Privy Council to "move your sovereign to show her own reasonable favour to our advancement in that which is right." She was, of course, referring to the naming of Elizabeth's heir, though she wisely assured the Council that "we be not of mind to press our good sister further than shall come of her own good pleasure."

Mary's supporters were more forthright. John Leslie wrote of the duty of all monarchs to prepare for a smooth transition of power after their deaths. To leave the succession open was to risk "the imminent and almost the inevitable danger of this our noble realm being [overwhelmed] with the raging and roaring waves of mutual discord and to be consumed with the terrible force of civil dissension." Elizabeth needed to look to Mary, whose claim to the throne was "most conformable to the law of God, of nature, and of this realm."

Leslie was entirely correct and, albeit rather belatedly, Mary formally abandoned any ambitions to supplant Elizabeth. Publicly, at least, the succession was all that Mary sought, but Elizabeth made it abundantly clear that she would not name an heir until she had either married or definitively decided not to marry. Mary was disappointed by such hedging, but it is important to stress that her relationship with Elizabeth was defined by polite tension. Matters would become considerably more

"It was necessary to keep Mary under house arrest, but Elizabeth did not rush to judgement about Mary's past behaviour or future intentions"

strained as the events of the later 1560s began to rapidly unfold.

Elizabeth may have been reluctant to marry, but this did not preclude her vigorous interference in Mary's quest for a husband. The prospect of Mary marrying someone such as Don Carlos, the son of Philip II, was abhorrent, so the Elizabethan

Home once more

Mary returns to Scotland. Following the Treaty of Edinburgh of 6 July 1560, Scotland is ruled by a Protestant regime, but Mary is allowed to worship privately as a Catholic.
19 August 1561



The second husband

Mary makes Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, the Earl of Ross. The couple are married in the chapel of Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh, on 29 July. As a widow, Mary wore a black dress.
15 May 1565

The husband rebels

Mary's confidante David Riccio is murdered as part of a plot against Mary including Darnley. Mary escapes to Dunbar on 11 March, raises an army and returns to power.
9 March 1566

The queen's heir

Mary gives birth to a son, James, the future James VI of Scotland and I of England, at Edinburgh Castle. He is baptised at Stirling Castle on 17 December according to Catholic rites.
19 June 1566





Despite the protection Elizabeth offered Mary, there is no evidence that the two ever met

"The fact that she was not an English subject was irrelevant and her royal status did not protect her"

regime made various suggestions for a more suitable match including, rather oddly, Elizabeth's intimate Robert Dudley. Mary declined such advice and plumped for Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, a man with his own strong claims to the English succession. They married in July 1565 but Darnley proved to be an unmitigated disaster. He became involved in machinations against his wife, was part of the assassination of Mary's confidante David Rizzio in March 1566, and by February 1567 he was dead. The house at Kirk o'Fields had been deliberately destroyed with gunpowder and Darnley was found strangled in the grounds.

Elizabeth wrote to Mary expressing sorrow for her cousin's troubles but, with a note of censoriousness, pointed to "such things as are produced to prove yourself the cause of all the same." Worse was to follow. Any talk of a love match between Mary and the man she married next is misguided. The Earl of Bothwell had to deploy unsavoury methods to win Mary's hand, only securing it after abducting the queen in the spring of 1567. Marriage followed in May, but by now large swathes of the Scottish nobility had grown heartily tired of her antics. Armies were raised and, in July, a captive Mary was forced to abdicate in favour of her infant son James. She was held at Lochleven Fortress, but managed to escape and cross the border into England in May 1568. As she wrote to Elizabeth: "I am now forced out of my kingdom and driven to such straits that, next to God, I have no hope but in your goodness."

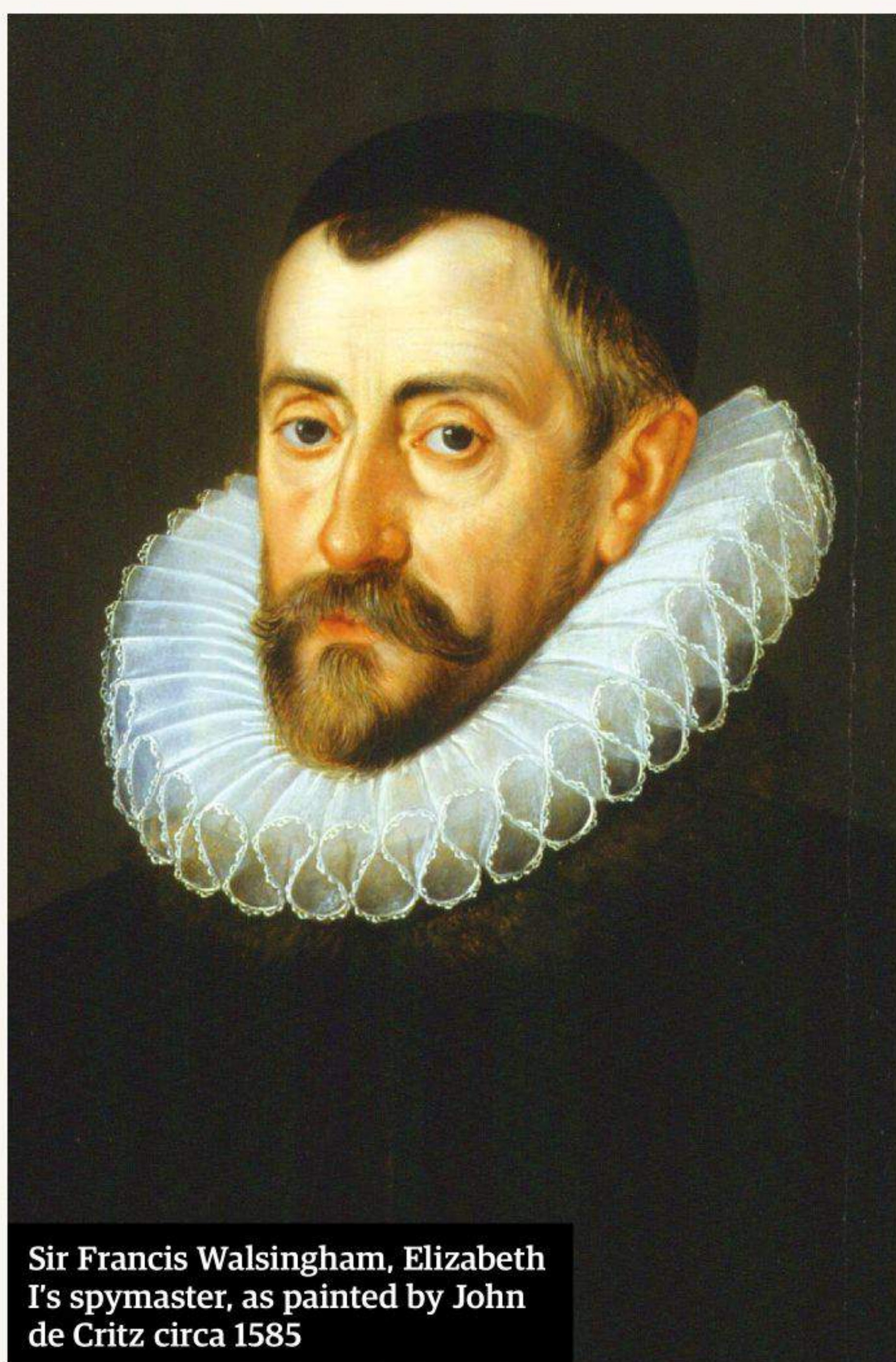
The situation was profoundly awkward for the English queen. Mary had been cast out by her nobles, was widely suspected of being involved in Darnley's mysterious murder, and the risk of her becoming a focus for Catholic disaffection in England was greater than ever before. Events in the years immediately following Mary's arrival across the border - the Northern Rebellion of 1569 and the papal excommunication of 1570 - did little to placate Mary's enemies. Thomas Norton found

a receptive audience when he described Mary Stuart as someone who had "made shipwreck of all honour and reputation" and whose "own acts publicly known to the world" revealed "of inclination how she is given."

Elizabeth took her duty of care towards a fellow monarch very seriously, however. It was necessary to keep Mary under house arrest, but Elizabeth did not rush to judgement about Mary's past behaviour or future intentions. Commissions of enquiry between October 1569 and January 1570 deployed evidence (now known to have been tampered with and forged) to point towards Mary's role in Darnley's murder, but Elizabeth concluded that nothing had been proven either positively or negatively. But then came the Ridolfi Plot of 1571, a grand scheme involving a planned invasion with Spanish troops, a rising of English Catholics, the removal of Elizabeth and the accession of Mary, married to the Duke of Norfolk, to the throne.

When parliament assembled in May 1572, there was much talk of Mary's knowledge of the plot, and over the coming months Elizabeth was provided with frank advice about how to deal with someone who had allegedly sought the "destruction of our prince". "We see not," the petitioners explained, "but her majesty must needs offend in conscience before God if she do not punish [Mary] according to the measure of her offence in the highest degree." There was no room for partiality or "slack justice", since Mary had "heaped up all the sins of the licentious sons of David: adulteries, murders, conspiracies, treasons and blasphemies against God." She had "altogether forgotten God and all goodness... seeking and devising by all means possible not only to deprive your majesty of all earthly dignities, but also of your natural life."

Various possible objections to killing Mary were tackled. The fact that she was not an English subject was irrelevant and her royal status did not protect her as "the dignity of the person offending increaseth the offence", and there were



Sir Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth I's spymaster, as painted by John de Critz circa 1585

The queen: a killer?

An explosion by gunpowder destroys the house at Kirk o'Field, near Edinburgh. Darnley's body is found in a nearby orchard, strangled but unharmed by the explosion.

10 February 1567

The third husband

Leading nobles lend support to the idea of the Earl of Bothwell marrying Mary. After Mary refuses, Bothwell abducts her and she agrees to the marriage, returning to Edinburgh on 6 May.

20 April 1567

A captured queen

Mary and Bothwell marry at Holyroodhouse and disgruntled nobles soon begin to raise armies. On 15 June, Mary surrenders and is confined at Lochleven Fortress.

15 May 1567



The heir takes over

Mary is forced to abdicate under threats that she will be killed if she does not comply. Her son James becomes King James VI of Scotland and is crowned on 29 July.

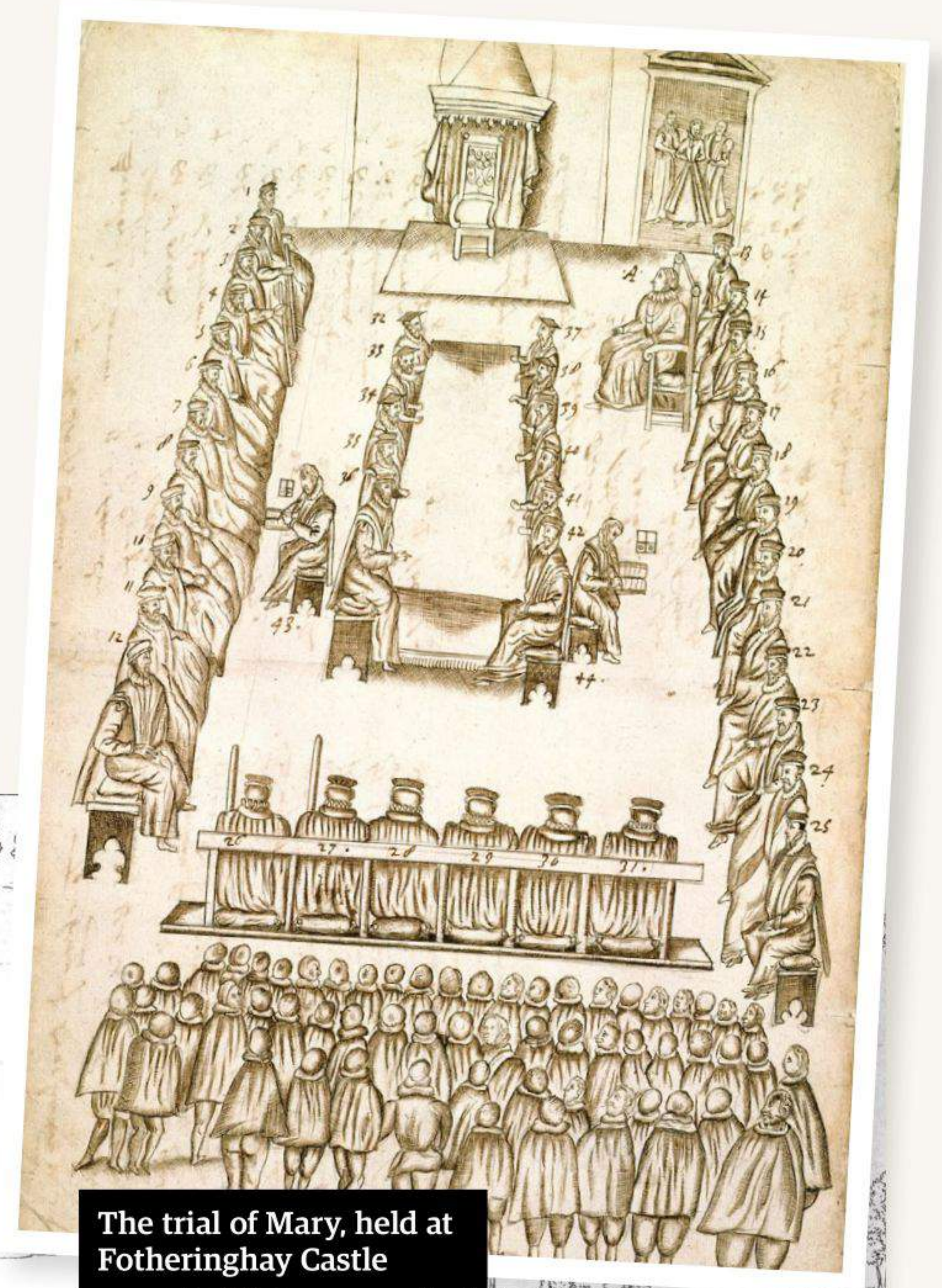
24 July 1567

many precedents for killing errant rulers. Even the "worthy" Joshua had "put to death at one time five kings... causing soldiers to set their feet on their necks and slay them".

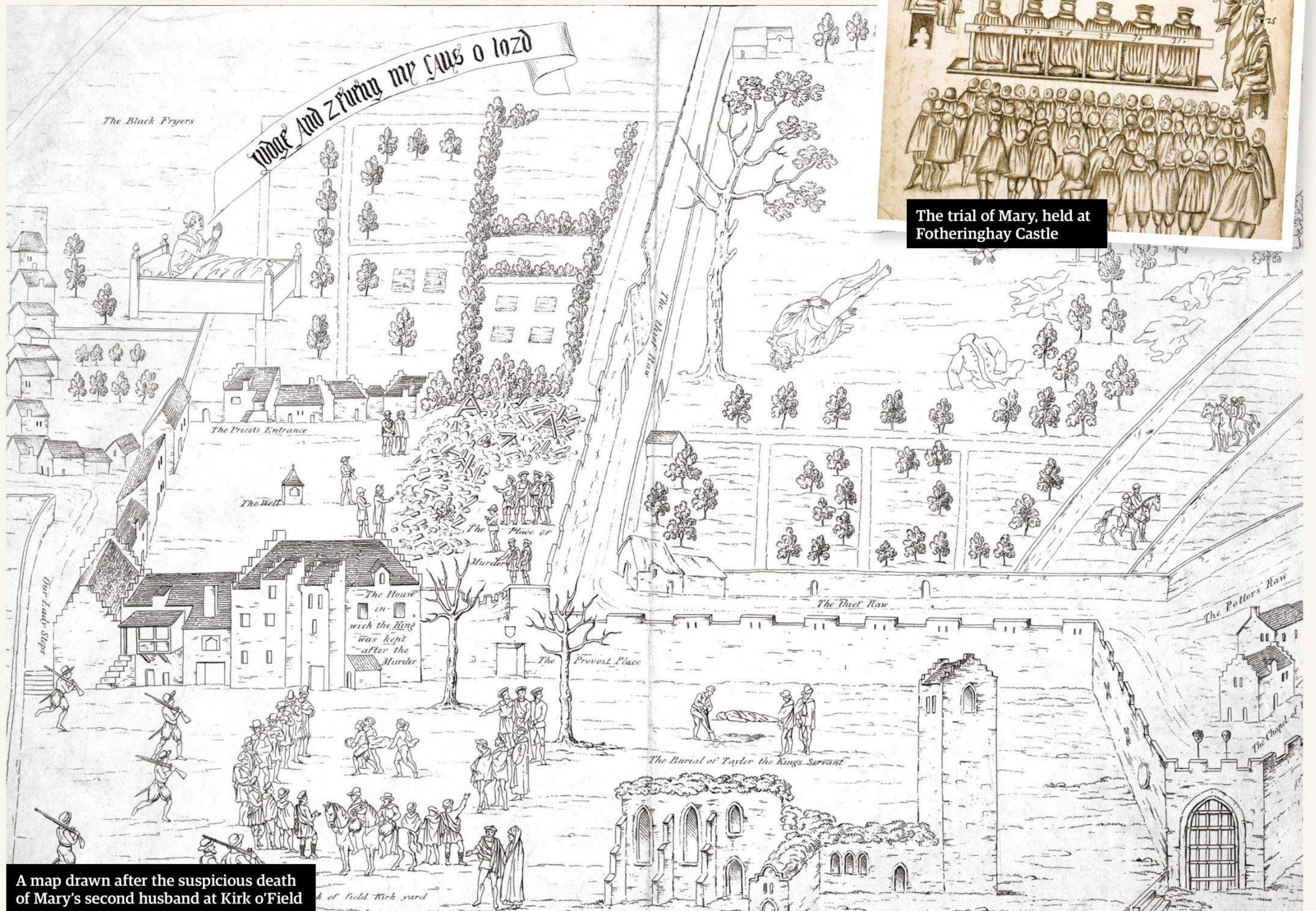
Elizabeth was not willing to sacrifice Mary, opting to placate her subjects by allowing the execution of the Duke of Norfolk. The queen appears to have regarded protecting Mary as her public duty, both as a relative and as a fellow monarch - but what of their private relationship? Many letters between the two survive and, while often hemmed in by protocol and politesse, they contain many glimpses of the steady souring of

relations through the period of Mary's enforced sojourn in England.

At first, Mary was full of gratitude "for the honourable respect and courteous entertainment that I have received since my arrival," but even at this date there were complaints. Before long she was grumbling about her servants being searched at the borders, believing all manner of rumours about Elizabeth supporting her enemies in Scotland, and announcing, "the state of my affairs constrains me to speak to you this freely." Before the decade was out, Mary was insisting that "I have trusted in you... I have undertaken nothing



The trial of Mary, held at Fotheringhay Castle



A map drawn after the suspicious death of Mary's second husband at Kirk o'Field

Escaping Scotland

Mary escapes from Lochleven and, after abortive military efforts, crosses the border into England on 16 May. She spends the remainder of her life under house arrest.
2 May 1568



Innocent or guilty?

Conferences are held at York and Westminster to assess Mary's possible role in the murder of Darnley. Elizabeth declares that neither Mary's guilt nor innocence has been proven.
October 1568-January 1569

More uprisings

The Northern Rising led by the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland takes place. While Mary has no direct involvement in the plot she is moved further south.
November 1569



A plot is uncovered

The so-called Ridolfi Plot aims to provoke rebellion among English Catholics with a Spanish invasion and Mary on the throne after a marriage to the Duke of Norfolk.
March 1571

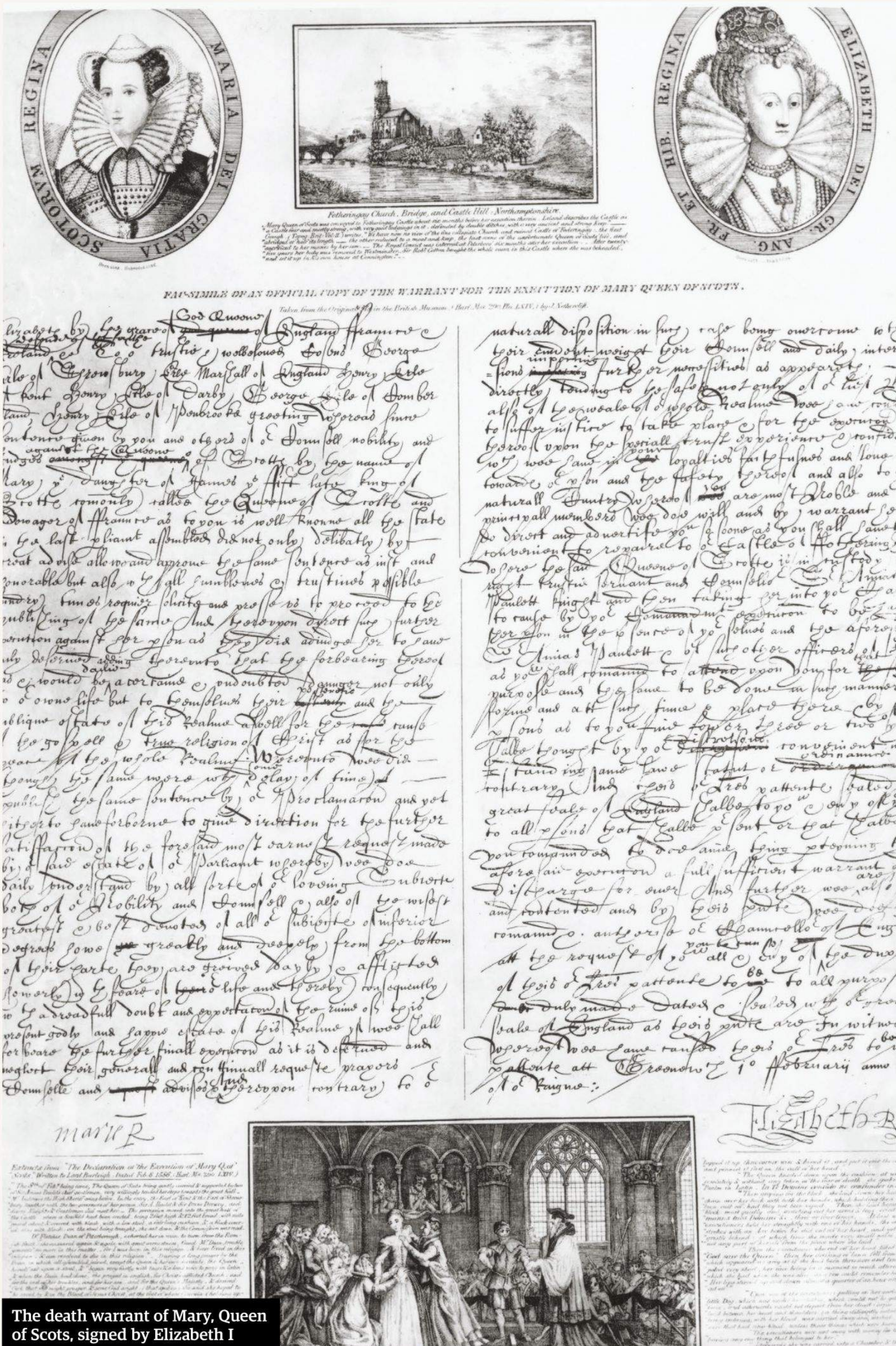
Fight and flight

but what you have advised" and sought "to obey you as a daughter would a mother." She could not understand the "unloving treatment" she had received. Criticism and veiled threats were unlikely to impress Elizabeth, but Mary was undeterred: "This I entreat you, not to compel me to hold different opinion of you than that which till now I have wished to maintain of so near a relative", adding that "I require succour; or else I shall be compelled to seek for it where God shall direct me"

Elizabeth was not the sort of monarch one inflicted an 'or else' clause upon and, as the 1570s unfolded, she grew increasingly irritated by Mary's petulance. The English queen reminded Mary that she had always "discharged the office of a good kinswoman" and was clearly offended by the "heap of confused troubled thoughts" stemming from Mary's pen. It was far wiser, Elizabeth suggested, "to believe and trust rather to me in all your difficulties" rather than "either bruits of the brainless vulgar or the viperous backbiters of the sowers of discord." By February 1572, after receiving a "long letter" from Mary "with multitude of sharp and injurious words," Elizabeth reminded her cousin "that it is not the manner to obtain good things with evil speeches." As the frequency of letters from Elizabeth declined, Mary fell back on tantrums, explaining in January 1574 that she had not written for some while "for fear of importuning you, since my letters have not latterly been thought worthy of a reply from you."

The mutual resentment simmered on, with Mary becoming exasperated by the vanishing possibility of her restoration to the Scottish throne and saddened by the mounting estrangement from her son - and then the plots returned. First came the Throckmorton Conspiracy in 1583, with its dreams of an invasion force led by the Duke of Guise removing Elizabeth from the throne. It is difficult to gauge the level of Mary's knowledge or backing, but some of her chief supporters were clearly involved. Thousands of Elizabeth's subjects were sufficiently alarmed to instigate the Bond of Association in 1584, whereby they swore to prosecute to death any pretender in whose name an assassination attempt against Elizabeth was launched.

In March 1585, Mary signed off a letter to Elizabeth as “your humble and affectionate, but



The death warrant of Mary, Queen of Scots, signed by Elizabeth I

Appeasing Parliament

Parliament meets to discuss Mary with various calls for either her execution or formal exclusion from the succession. Elizabeth consents to the execution of Norfolk to calm the waters.

May-June 1572

Catholic scheming

The Throckmorton Plot is revealed, the goal of which was for the Duke of Guise to invade England with Spanish support and replace Elizabeth I with Mary, Queen of Scots.
November 1583

End the pretenders

The Bond of Association is established. This involved taking an oath to prosecute to death any pretender in whose name an assassination attempt against Elizabeth is launched.

19 October 1584



Imprisoned queen

Mary is brought under more restrictive imprisonment and moved from Tutbury Castle to Chartley Hall, Staffordshire, in December. She remained there for nine months.

January 1585

Another Catholic plot

The Babington Plot, with the aim of assassinating Elizabeth, takes place. The English government is fully aware of the machinations and attempts to make Mary implicate herself.

March-July 1586



Den viii february werde onthalt Maria

Stuart Schots Coninginne's terrence & conincs Catgo-
lyck hebbende gecocht oecel onnus ten aen te richsten haer schen-
mee ten te maechen van Engelant & oecel haer vanden haet
den xxiij. d. 1587.

A contemporary depiction of the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots at Fotheringhay Castle

"Elizabeth fell into a frenzy of grief, lashing out at the councillors who had sent the warrant to the castle"

desolate, sister and cousin." The sense of despair is unmistakable. Mary tells of her "mised child" and those who sought "to sever him from me as they have laboured so earnestly since long ago." She writes that she is more than happy to abandon any hope of being the successor and wonders if she might be allowed to travel "out of this isle into some solitary place."

Mary's enemies had no intention of allowing such dreams to be fulfilled and, with the Babington Plot of 1586, they found their opportunity to strike. This latest conspiracy was real enough, with the familiar goals of killing Elizabeth and replacing her with Mary, but when the government caught wind of the plans they did not move to shut them down. Rather, they infiltrated the plotters' ranks and allowed lines of communication to be opened up

with Mary. Letters to and from Mary were hidden in beer barrels delivered to Chartley House, but they would

be copied, deciphered when necessary and sent on to the mastermind of Elizabethan intelligence, Francis Walsingham. When Anthony Babington wrote to Mary on 6 July informing her of his plans, Walsingham knew all about it. When Mary replied on 17 July, Walsingham was delighted. Mary had written of her awareness of "the affair being thus prepared" and showed no resistance to the "accomplishing of their design".

Mary was tried and found guilty at a commission just months later in October. In its wake, parliament

onestat la quele conoissant vous estre si peu chere ie remets a la misericorde
de dieu resolu de vivre patiemment en adversite & prison s'malaise tant
quil luy plaira & de mourir quant aussi il luy plaira me delivrer de ce
malheureux monde auquel ne sachant combien son vouloir est quere
demeure estant visitee par maladie causee de tant d'incommodites non
acoustumees ou par vostre non deservue rigueur ie vous priay aussi a ce
forcee par la zelle de ma conscience) de me per mettre amior un prestre
de l'esglise catholique de la quelle ie suis membre pour me consoller & sollicitier de
mon demour lesquelles resquestes ie priay dieu & en prison & en mon
de rendre vostre cuer tel qui luy puisse estre agreable & a vous saluer
& si ren suis refusee ie vous laisse la charge den responch edevant
dieu par faulte de moyen de faire mon demour en ayant deurement
supplie & requise vous enqui gist le refus ou permission. Il m'est
encore vous faire une autre resqueste de pendre par force pour vous
& dextreme consolation pour moy cest quil vous plaise ayant par
dune de fidele mere d'entre les bras on a arache son seul enfant &
esperance de future ioye en ce monde me permettre decrire a tout
le moins lettres ouvertes pour menquerir a la verite de ces
nouvelles & luy ramenter son sa triste mere afin que ressevant
quelque reconfort de son bon portement ie luy puisse aussi
ramenter son devoir vers dieu & vers moy sans le quel nul
fameur humaine luy pourra profiter car fayllant a l'un de ces deux
commendements si expre dieu le pourroit oublier entons les autres
& si les points subdits me sont accordez ie metray poine tout a ung comp
de me disposer pour sans regret ressevoir l'avis ou la mort ou quoyquil
plaise a cheu menager entre vous meyr les quelles ayant baies ie jray
dieu pour conclusion vous honner madame sa sainte grace en ce
monde & sa gloire en l'autre de mon estrate prison de cheplie en
octobre

A letter from Mary to Elizabeth, asking for permission to speak to a Catholic priest and her son

Vostre bien bonne sœur
MARIE

met. It was time, as one speaker succinctly put it, to "take away this most wicked and filthy woman with justice." Petitions were again raised to execute Mary, and Elizabeth's objections were confronted head on. The Scottish queen was "only a cousin to you in a remote degree, but we be sons and children of this land whereof you be not only the natural mother, but also the wedded spouse."

If Queen Elizabeth refused to act, there would be dreadful consequences: "In sparing her, your majesty shall not only give courage and

Mary is implicated

Babington writes to Mary, who replies on 17 July, giving Walsingham the ammunition he needs to implicate them both. Babington and his co-conspirators are executed on 20 September.

6 July 1586



To kill a queen?

A commission to try Mary is established and she's moved to Fotheringhay Castle. A hearing takes place on 14-15 October, followed by proceedings in Star Chamber on 25 October.

9 September 1586

Declared to die

Parliament assembles and petitions for Mary's execution on 12 and 24 November. After being convicted, her death sentence is proclaimed on 4 December.

29 October 1586



Off with her head

Elizabeth reluctantly signs Mary's death warrant. Mary Stuart is executed at Fotheringhay Castle on 8 February aged 44 like, in her own words, "a common criminal".

1 February 1587

1587

hardiness to the enemies of God, of your majesty, and of your kingdom, but shall discomfort and daunt with despair the hearts of your loving people and deservedly provoke the heavy hand and wrath of God."

Once more, however, Elizabeth prevaricated. In a speech on 24 November, in direct response to the petitions, she explained that, "I have strived more this day than ever in my life whether I should speak or use silence." At this stage, she could only provide what she described as an "answer answerless" to the question of what she would or would not do to Mary. Perhaps this was heartfelt confusion, or maybe a way of advertising the queen's instincts for clemency ahead of making the decision, but few doubted how it was going

to end. By 4 December, the death warrant had been drawn up. In the same month, Mary wrote to Elizabeth with resignation: "You will credit or disbelieve my discourse as it seems best to you." She was "resolved to strengthen myself in Christ Jesus alone" who had already carried her through so many "unjust calumnies, accusations and condemnations". She was referring to herself as a martyr-in-waiting, coming to the end of her "long and weary pilgrimage".

We can only speculate about what Elizabeth was thinking through these difficult months, as petitioners arrived from France and Scotland hoping to intercede on Mary's behalf. Mary's enemies at court grew impatient but, on 1 February, Elizabeth finally signed the death warrant. She

claimed to have told her Secretary of State to keep it safe but also appears to have indicated that she wanted to hear no more about the matter. To add more confusion, a suggestion arose that Mary's gaoler might quietly do away with her, but he refused. Faced with so much uncertainty, the Privy Council elected to seal and send the death warrant to Fotheringhay Castle, where Mary was being held. Mary was executed on the morning of 8 February and by the afternoon bells were ringing and celebratory bonfires burning in London. Elizabeth fell into a frenzy of grief, lashing out at the councillors who had sent the warrant to the castle. Perhaps this was genuine anger, perhaps stage-managed, or maybe derived from a sense of guilt for an action for which she could not avoid some element of responsibility.

From that day to this, judgements of Mary have been sharply divided. For Richard Crompton, writing shortly after the execution, "She was the only hope of all discontented subjects, she was the foundation whereon all the evil disposed did build, she was the root from which all rebellions and treacheries did spring." The Jesuit Robert Southwell saw things differently, giving voice to Mary in one of his poems:

*"Alive a queen, now dead I am a saint;
Once Mary called, my name now martyr is;
From earthly reign debarred by restraint,
In lieu whereof I live in heaven's bliss."*

As one might expect, Job Throckmorton declared that "it was, out of all question, a very worthy act that was lately done at Fotheringay." Not that Mary's demise brought an end to his outbursts. Just a few weeks after Mary's death, he turned his sights on foreign policy and offered bitter denunciations of politics around Europe. Spain was the enemy du jour, so we can assume that no one was particularly perturbed when the MP announced that the nation was "possessed by an incestuous race of bastards", but taking pot shots at friendly countries was a different matter. He despaired of Scotland being ruled by "so young and wavering a head", and his attack on France likely took some members' breath away. The French king, he averred, was "stricken with a fearful kind of giddiness, as it were a man in a trance or kind of ecstasy", but what could one expect from the descendants of someone like Catherine de' Medici?

This time around, Throckmorton's venom was deemed untimely. His speech was denounced as "lewd and blasphemous" and he was advised that it was best not to speak "sharply of princes"; it was important to "use great regard of princes in free speech." Such courtesy, as those present at the admonishment must have realised, had rarely been extended to Mary, Queen of Scots.



Elizabeth's suitors

Who were the men that tried to woo England's virgin queen?

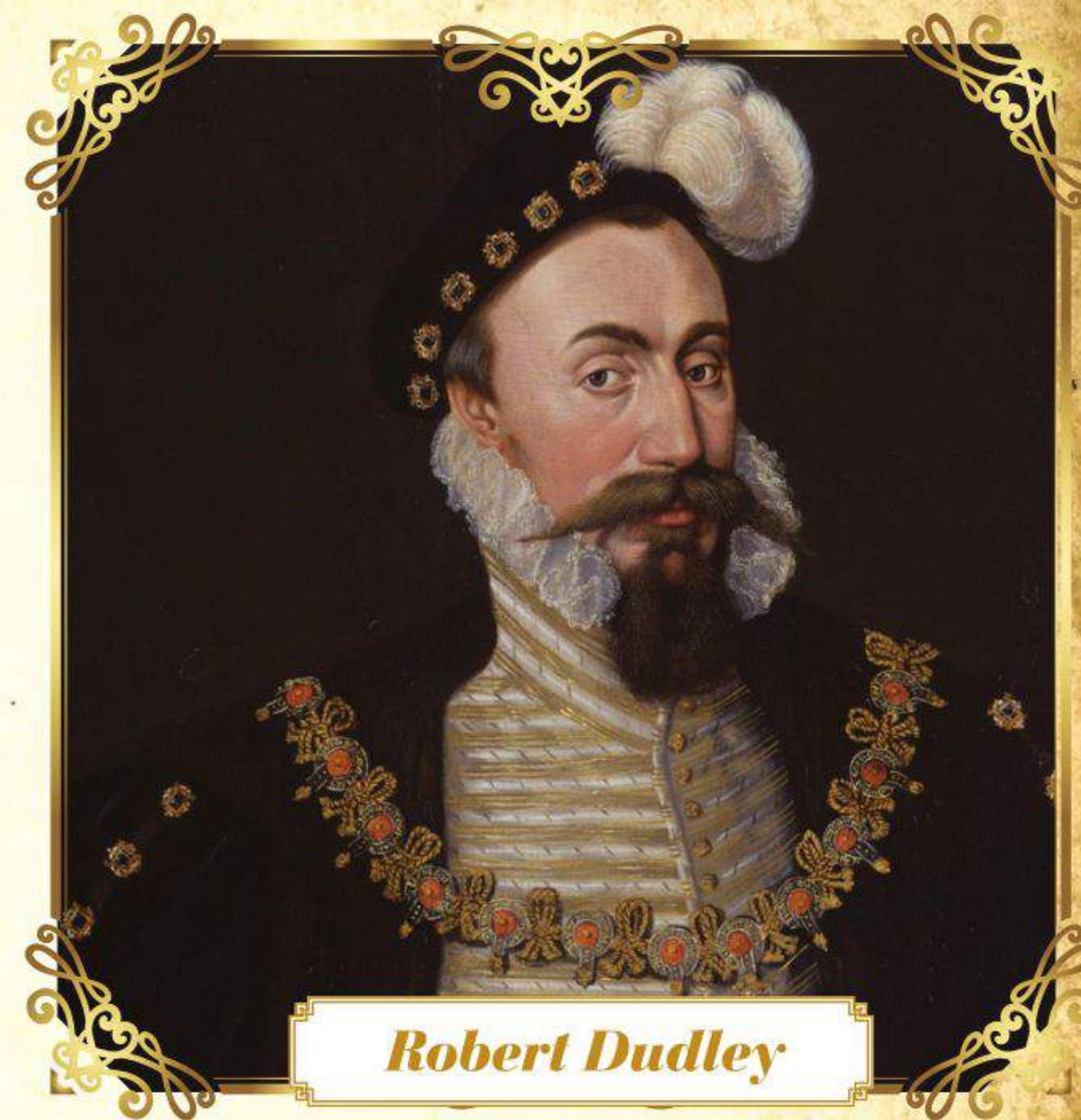


Philip II of Spain

Philip II of Spain proposed to Elizabeth less than two months after the death of Mary Tudor, his wife and Elizabeth's sister. The potential strategic advantages of the match were significant, but Philip's desire to save England from Protestantism's resurgence did little to impress the queen or her advisers. Philip's proposal was flatly rejected, but he still hoped to see a Habsburg take Elizabeth's hand.

The suit of the suggested alternative, **Charles, Archduke of Austria**, gained some traction for a short while, but had fizzled out by 1560.

In the same period, the courtship of **Erik XIV of Sweden** (via his representative Duke John of Finland) appears to have gained some supporters but came to nothing.



Robert Dudley

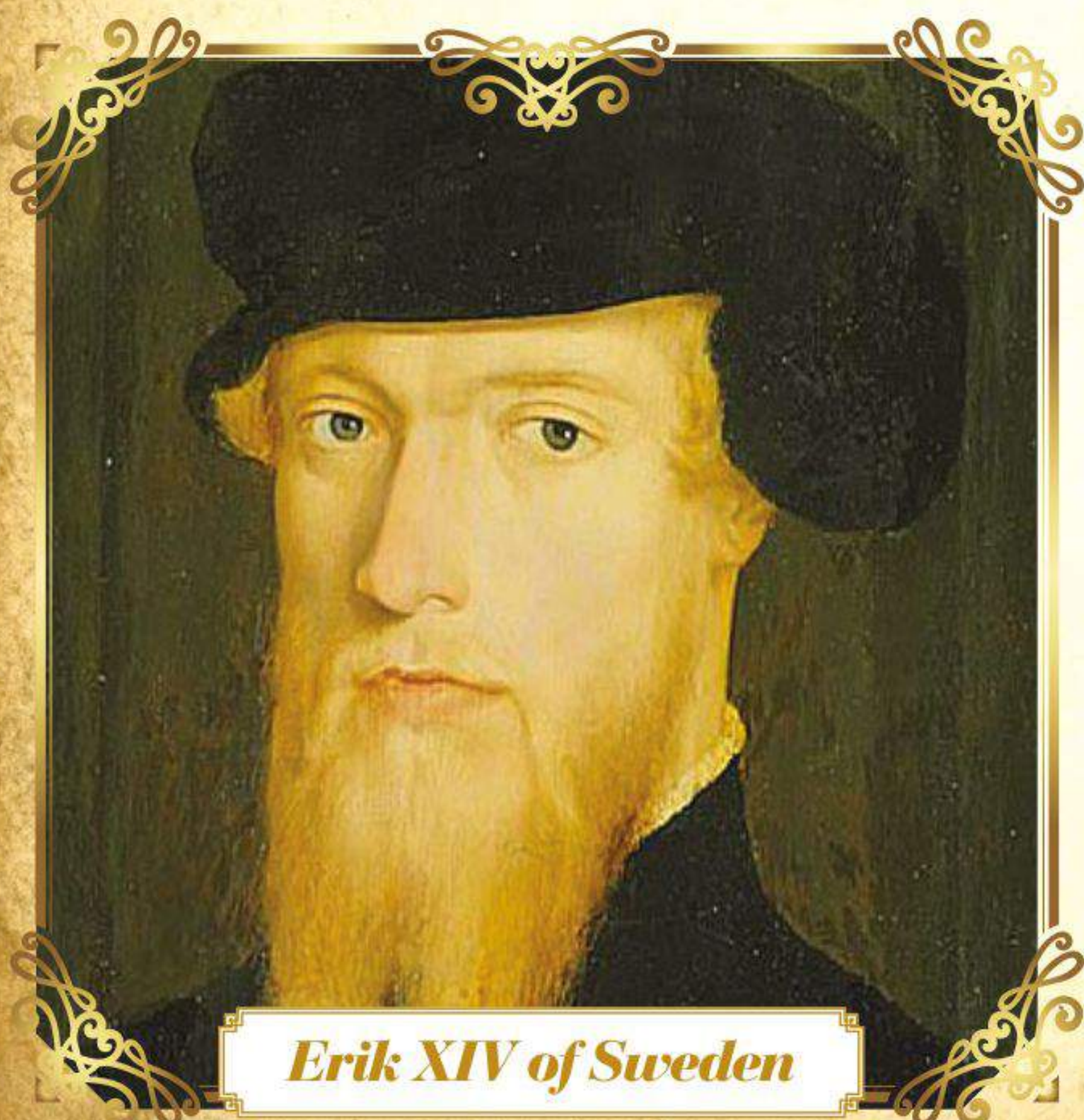
If Elizabeth ever loved a man it was **Robert Dudley**, but two mighty obstacles stood in the way of any marriage. First, Dudley's noble lineage only stretched back a few generations and, secondly, he already had a wife: Amy Robsart. In September 1560, Amy was found dead at the foot of a staircase and, while a jury came back with a verdict of death by misadventure, rumours circulated about possible suicide or foul play. Marriage between Dudley and Elizabeth was now impossible, though the two sustained a close relationship for the remainder of Dudley's life.

In 1570-71, marriage with the **Duke of Anjou** (the future Henry III) seemed feasible but, even if Elizabeth took the idea seriously, Anjou's unwillingness to compromise his Catholic beliefs was an insurmountable obstacle.



Duke of Anjou

His brother, the **Duke of Alençon**, was suggested as an alternative and, while this notion was rejected at this stage, Alençon made more promising progress later in the decade. In August 1579, Alençon (now the Duke of Anjou himself following his brother's accession to the French throne) arrived at the English court. To many onlookers' surprise, he cultivated a flirtatious relationship with the queen and negotiations for marriage reached an advanced stage. It is entirely possible, however, that this spectacle was chiefly a means to irritate England's chief rival, Spain. In any event, hostility to the French match was widespread both within Elizabeth's regime and in the court of public opinion, chiefly owing to Anjou's Catholicism. Moreover, Elizabeth was in her mid-40s by this point, so childbirth would have carried significant risks, assuming it was still possible.



Erik XIV of Sweden



Duke of Alençon



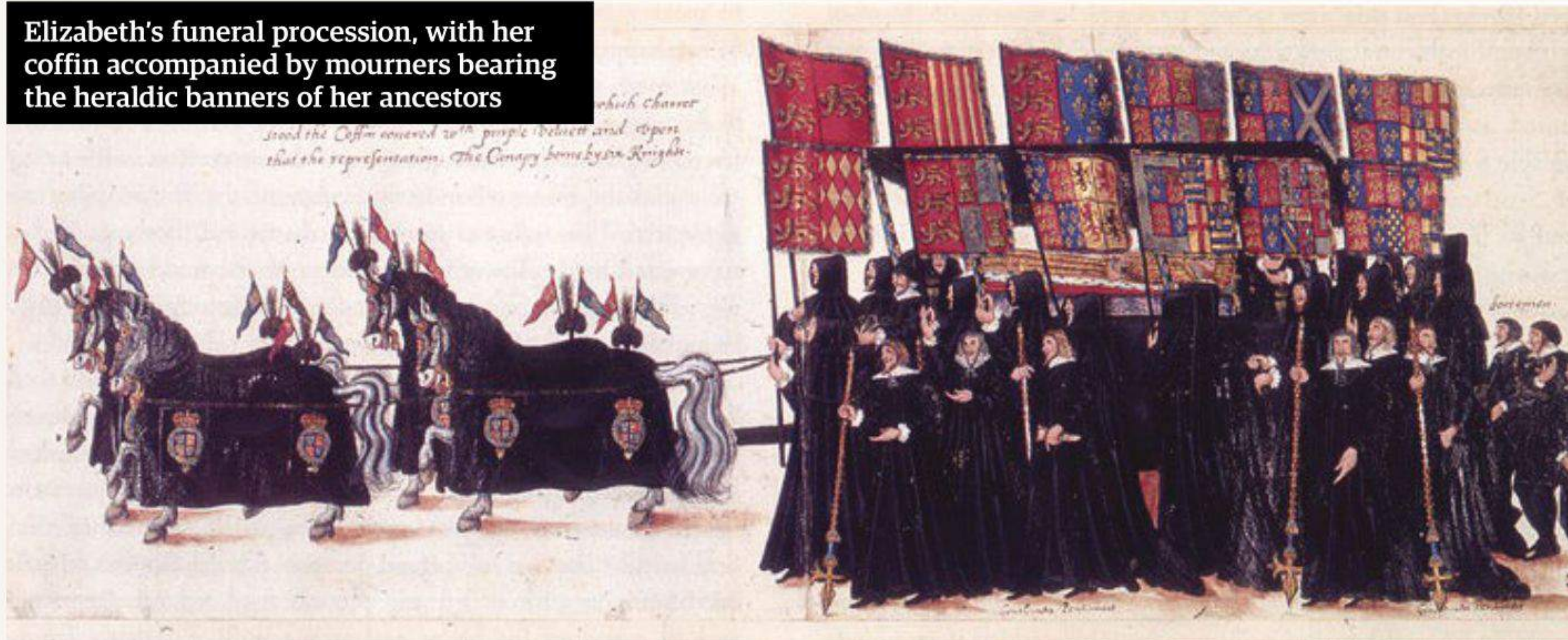
A haunting image of Elizabeth painted after her death, with Death hanging over her left shoulder while Time sleeps by her right

The end of an era

After spending almost five decades as queen, Elizabeth's reign came to an end and ushered in a new dynasty with James VI of Scotland at the helm

Words by Jessica Leggett

Elizabeth's funeral procession, with her coffin accompanied by mourners bearing the heraldic banners of her ancestors



R

obert Cecil, Queen Elizabeth's Secretary of State, sighed with exasperation. He

watched as she stood in the middle of the floor, completely motionless. The queen, wallowing in melancholy, had been

in the same position for days with no desire to move. Cecil knew that the queen was ill, and that she desperately needed some rest. Plucking up the courage, he walked over to Elizabeth and bravely told her that she must go to bed. The queen looked at him with shock and furiously responded, "The word must is not to be used to princes!" Even on her deathbed, Elizabeth was not to be ordered about.

Queen Elizabeth was one of the most formidable and successful rulers to have ever graced the English throne. Her reign of almost 45 years was a golden age of exploration, trade and culture. She had united England under one church, a contentious issue ever since the reign of her father, King Henry VIII, and turned her country into a global power to be reckoned with.

But Elizabeth's success had come at a price. As a young girl, she had witnessed her father's numerous marriages and obsessive quest for a male heir, which triggered the tragic downfall of her mother. As a young woman, she had watched her half-sister, Queen Mary, fight against the opposition she had faced because of her choice of groom - while Elizabeth herself was caught up in scandalous rumours of an affair with Sir Thomas Seymour, the fourth husband of her stepmother and guardian, Catherine Parr.

Elizabeth had learnt early on just how dangerous personal and indeed sexual relationships could be in a court dominated by intrigue and conspiracy. As well as this, her experiences had taught her that her power as a female ruler would always be questioned if she had a husband. Unsurprisingly, the queen reacted by dragging her heels when

it came to the subject of marriage. For years, her advisers had tried in vain to encourage their queen to get married and provide the heir to the English throne.

There were fleeting moments when it appeared that Elizabeth was going to get engaged. The closest she got was to Francis, Duke of Anjou, who was over two decades her junior and someone she cared deeply for. But opposition from the public and her Privy Council, largely because the Duke was both French and a Catholic, forced her to forget about the match. Ultimately, Elizabeth was destined to remain as the Virgin Queen.

With no direct heir to succeed her, the Tudor dynasty was destined to come to an end with Elizabeth. As she grew older and passed the age where she could bear children, it became clear to those closest to the queen that other arrangements would have to be made to secure the English succession.

For the first three decades of Elizabeth's reign her cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, was her nearest legitimate heir. But after much back and forth, Mary was eventually beheaded in 1587, after she was implicated in a plot against Elizabeth. At the time of her death, Mary had been kept under house arrest for almost 20 years.

Following Mary's abdication in 1567 her son, James, inherited the Scottish throne as King James VI. Upon her execution 20 years later, he also inherited her legal right to the English throne. For many in England, James was a far more agreeable option to succeed Elizabeth since, unlike his mother, he had been raised as a Protestant.

James was the logical choice to succeed Elizabeth, but she stubbornly refused to name an heir, despite petitions from parliament. The queen knew that the second she officially named a successor, factions would start to form as courtiers would flock to their side, lining up to endear themselves to the next king of England. This would lead to conflict and so the queen's hesitation was understandable - but it also plunged the country into a succession crisis.

The 'Golden Speech'

Elizabeth's emotional last stand for her country

Elizabeth's 'Golden Speech' has gone down in history as one of the most famous she ever delivered, along with her iconic speech to the troops at Tilbury. With the monopoly crisis growing and the members of parliament angrily demanding reform, the queen decided it was time to face them in person - for what she knew would be the last time.

On 30 November 1601, Elizabeth entered Whitehall and addressed all 141 members of parliament. Along with her promise to end the practice of monopolies, the queen also spoke of her devotion to England: "And though you have had, and may have, many mightier and wiser princes sitting in this seat, yet you never had, nor shall have, any that will love you better."

Her moving speech did turn out to be Elizabeth's last to parliament, and it surprised many of the members who did not anticipate such a touching moment from their queen. Her love and respect for them, detailed in her speech, helped to dissolve tension surrounding the monopoly issue and wider economic concerns. For many, the 'Golden Speech' is seen as a symbolic end to her reign, with the queen passing away less than two years later.



Queen Elizabeth proved to be a skilled orator during her reign

This portrait of James was painted around 1605, two years after his succession to the English throne



“The death of Essex broke the queen’s heart”

In the face of the queen’s resistance, Cecil knew that the question of the English succession needed to be answered. After all, the peace and stability that Elizabeth had fostered for her country during her long reign depended on it. Taking the matter into his own hands, Cecil decided that the best way forward was to begin secret negotiations with the Scottish king. He hoped that by contacting James, he was ensuring a peaceful transition of power in the event of Elizabeth’s death.

But Cecil’s desire to initiate contact with James was hindered thanks to his rival at court and Elizabeth’s young favourite, Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex. They had battled each other for the queen’s favour, and Essex’s charming and flirtatious nature had won her over - with Essex secretly in communication with James himself. Nonetheless, Essex’s unruly behaviour and disastrous rebellion eventually led to his downfall and execution in February 1601.

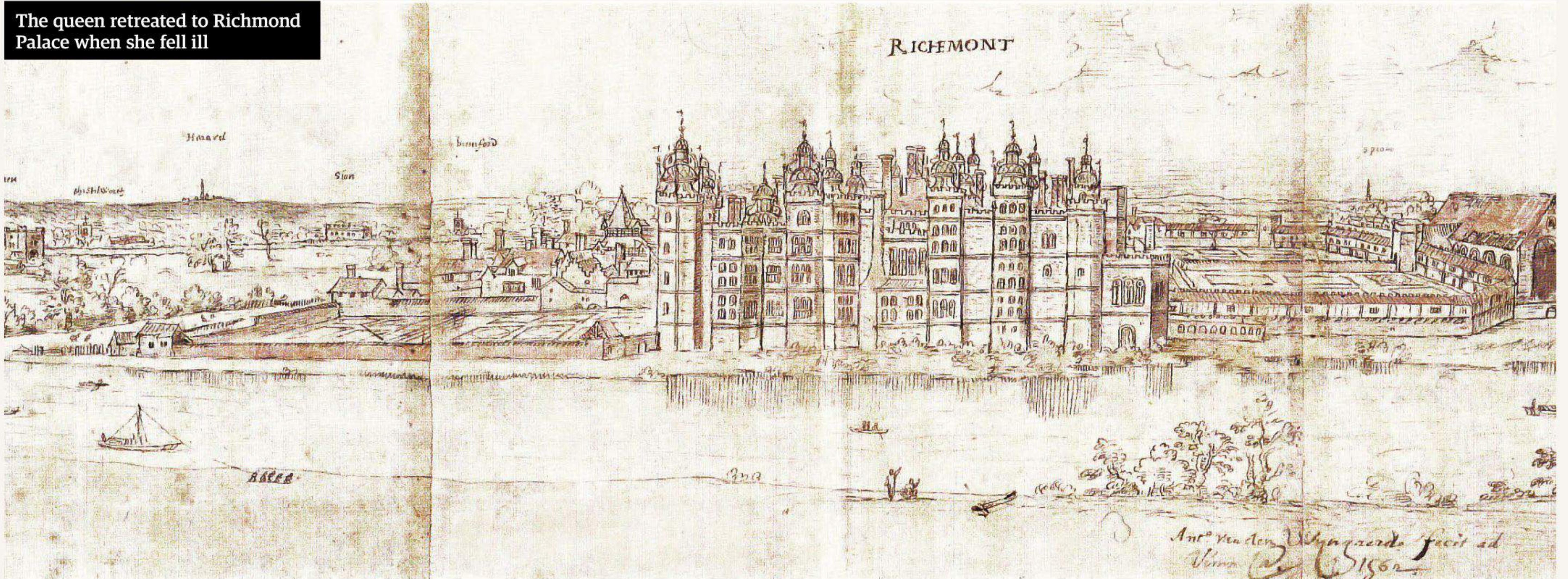
The death of Essex broke the queen’s heart, even though his actions had forced the consequences. However, with Essex gone, he had finally been removed as an obstacle to Cecil’s ambitions. He was soon able to start his own secret correspondence with King James, with their letters written in code - as Cecil’s actions could cost him not only his career, but his life.

Cecil sent James advice on the best ways to flatter the queen and earn her favour, in the hope that she would relent and name him as her heir. James himself had spent years trying to get Elizabeth to accept him to no avail. One famous example of this is when the queen was facing down the incoming Spanish Armada, and James promised his support to her in a letter in which he referred to himself as her “natural son.”

Cecil’s clandestine efforts were for the greater good of the kingdom, and they appeared to be working, as James agreed to seek Elizabeth’s approval by building a harmonious relationship. The queen responded well and even granted James an extra £2,000 a year for his English pension, but she still did not commit to naming him as her heir.

Even though Cecil worked tirelessly to secure a peaceful succession, he never actually wanted to lose Elizabeth. As her predecessors had shown, a new monarchy always brought with it new upheaval. However, this sentiment was not shared by everyone at the English court, who looked forward to a fresh start for both the monarchy and the country.

The queen retreated to Richmond Palace when she fell ill



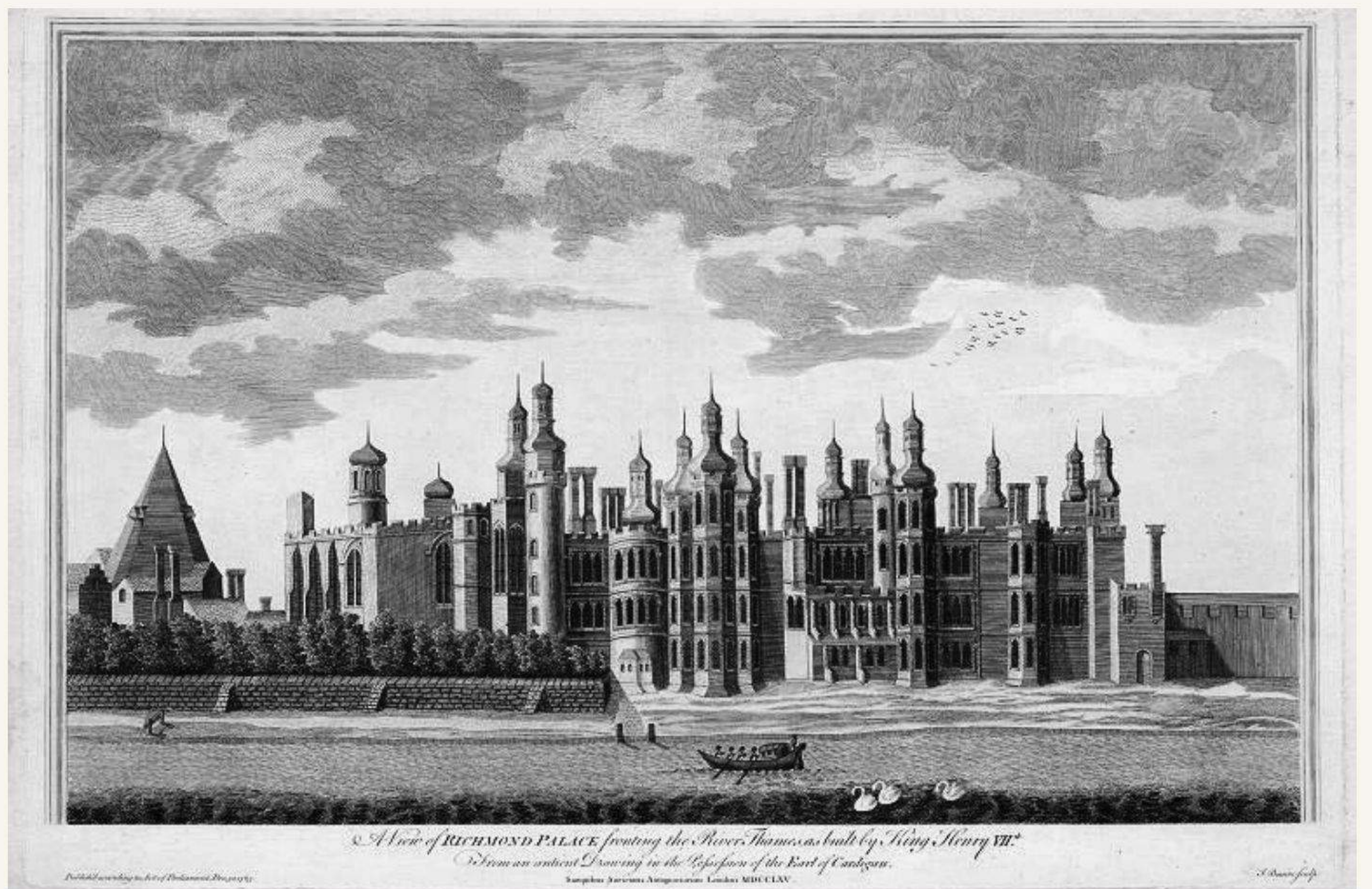
Throughout her reign, the queen had cultivated an image for herself as an eternally youthful, beautiful and powerful woman. Even as she aged, Elizabeth was determined to maintain this façade and keep to the traditional status quo of her court. But there was a new generation of courtiers and members of the public who saw her as a traditionalist, standing in the way of change.

As glorious as Elizabeth's reign had been, now there were many who were becoming disillusioned with her. In her later years the economy suffered as a result of poor harvests and the unsuccessful war against Ireland, which had wasted a lot of money. To top it all off, growing unrest in regard to monopolies had reached boiling point.

The queen had abused the monopoly system for a long time, granting them to her favourite courtiers which caused prices to rise, while she also made financial gains from them. It led to one of the biggest crises to hit during the last few years of her reign, but luckily for the queen, she won parliament over with an impassioned speech about her love for her country.

The situation in England rallied once again as the harvests improved and a truce was reached with Ireland. Elizabeth herself seemed to gain a new lease of life, experiencing good health for the first time in years. Although England was not at the height of its glory, it was at least heading in a positive direction. Then, all of a sudden, the queen's health began to quickly deteriorate.

On top of her ill health, Elizabeth had also fallen into a deep bout of depression. It had slowly set



in over the years, as the queen had witnessed the deaths of many of her long-standing supporters and friends, such as Robert Dudley, Sir Francis Walsingham and Sir William Cecil, Robert Cecil's father. William's death particularly affected the queen, so much so that she even fed him herself in the fruitless hope that he would get better.

Elizabeth's vibrant and charismatic personality, which had charmed all of those around her, dissipated completely. By 1603, she was suffering with a fever and throat ulcers, which made it

increasingly painful for her to eat properly. Her sudden illness came as a shock to many because it had arrived so quickly - but Elizabeth knew that death awaited her.

The queen moved to Richmond Palace to cope with her illness. Perhaps hoping to avoid the inevitable, she stood for hours on end and refused to go to bed, ignoring Cecil's protestations. She eventually chose to lie on some cushions on the floor but remained adamant that she would not go to bed - and that she would not write a will nor name an heir.

An exasperated Cecil once again decided to take matters into his own hands. Realising that Elizabeth's days were dangerously numbered, he chose to send James a draft proclamation for his accession to the throne. At the same time, the

"Hoping to avoid the inevitable, she stood for hours on end and refused to go to bed, ignoring Cecil's protestations"

Elizabeth's last letter

Elizabeth remained stubborn even in her final correspondence

It was around 1585 when Elizabeth started to communicate with James directly, instead of using their ambassadors. Although this correspondence remained irregular, it did continue for the rest of the queen's life, with James hoping to secure confirmation from her that he was going to be named her heir.

Their letters were rather affectionate, with Elizabeth often addressing James as "my good brother." Her very last letter to James is dated 5 January 1603, just two months before her death. In it, she justifies her actions against Spain, perhaps hoping that James will understand her reasons and continue her foreign policy after her death.

However, the most interesting aspect of the letter is not what it contains, but what it is missing. By this point, Elizabeth's health is clearly declining, and it is obvious that she is nearing death's door. Despite this, she still does not acknowledge James as her heir, even though they both know that he will be the one to succeed her on the throne after she passes away. The letter itself is carefully balanced in this respect, as the queen appears fond of James while still denying him the official role as her heir.

*Such a private of di. C. shall be
taught a better lesson than play
depression and bold apart after
his kin. We your good liking that
which as I hope is far for your
intention. So with his command
to master Good Master Singles
assurances at Rome of which
you have or now have heard and
thus you see how to fulfill your
trust ripened in me which to
inform your mind I
have sincerely made patient
my sincerity and not from
it much wisdom yet stuff
to great good will I hope you
will be able to do so
you to long to my skouting
and as good as for a heart
that shall be filled with the
Suri affection of your
Loving and faithful
Sister
Elizabeth*

A copy of Elizabeth's last letter to King James VI of Scotland

Elizabeth stubbornly refused to go to bed when she was deathly ill



queen's cousin, Robert Carey, Earl of Monmouth lurked outside the palace, waiting for news of her death. His plan was to rush to Edinburgh as soon as she had passed away to tell James, hoping that he would gain favour with the new king as a result.

On 23 March, Elizabeth was at death's door and her councillors were forced to pluck up the courage and ask her whether she wished James to succeed her. Unable to speak, the queen lifted her hand and drew a circle around her head, to represent a crown, thereby finally confirming that James was her heir to the throne.

Soon afterwards, Queen Elizabeth fell into a coma. She never woke up, finally succumbing to her illness in the early hours of 24 March 1603, aged 69 years old. In the dead of night, Elizabeth's body was transported via the Thames from Richmond Palace to Whitehall, where she lay in

state until her funeral. Meanwhile, Monmouth raced north to Edinburgh to inform James that he was now the king of England.

Just over a month after her death, the queen's funeral was held at Westminster Abbey on 28 April. Her coffin was draped in purple cloth and was carried by a hearse through the streets, driven by horses covered with black velvet. It was said that the painted wooden effigy on her coffin was so lifelike that when her body passed her weeping subjects, they gasped in shock.

James had left Edinburgh just under two weeks after Elizabeth's death, and he did not reach London until 7 May. He was welcomed by his new subjects, most of whom were relieved that the succession was peaceful and smooth. Courtiers immediately converged on their new king, hoping to secure his favour.

“Although her popularity had waned in her final years, the queen remained devoted to her country”

Robert Cecil's clandestine letters to James and his efforts to sort out the succession had paid off, as he remained as the king's right-hand man for the first nine years of his reign, until Cecil's death in 1612. As for Monmouth, James had initially made him a gentleman of the bedchamber for informing him of the queen's death. However, he faced significant backlash at court for rushing off so quickly, as many felt his actions lacked the respect and decency owed to Elizabeth. The situation led to James dropping Monmouth from his new post.

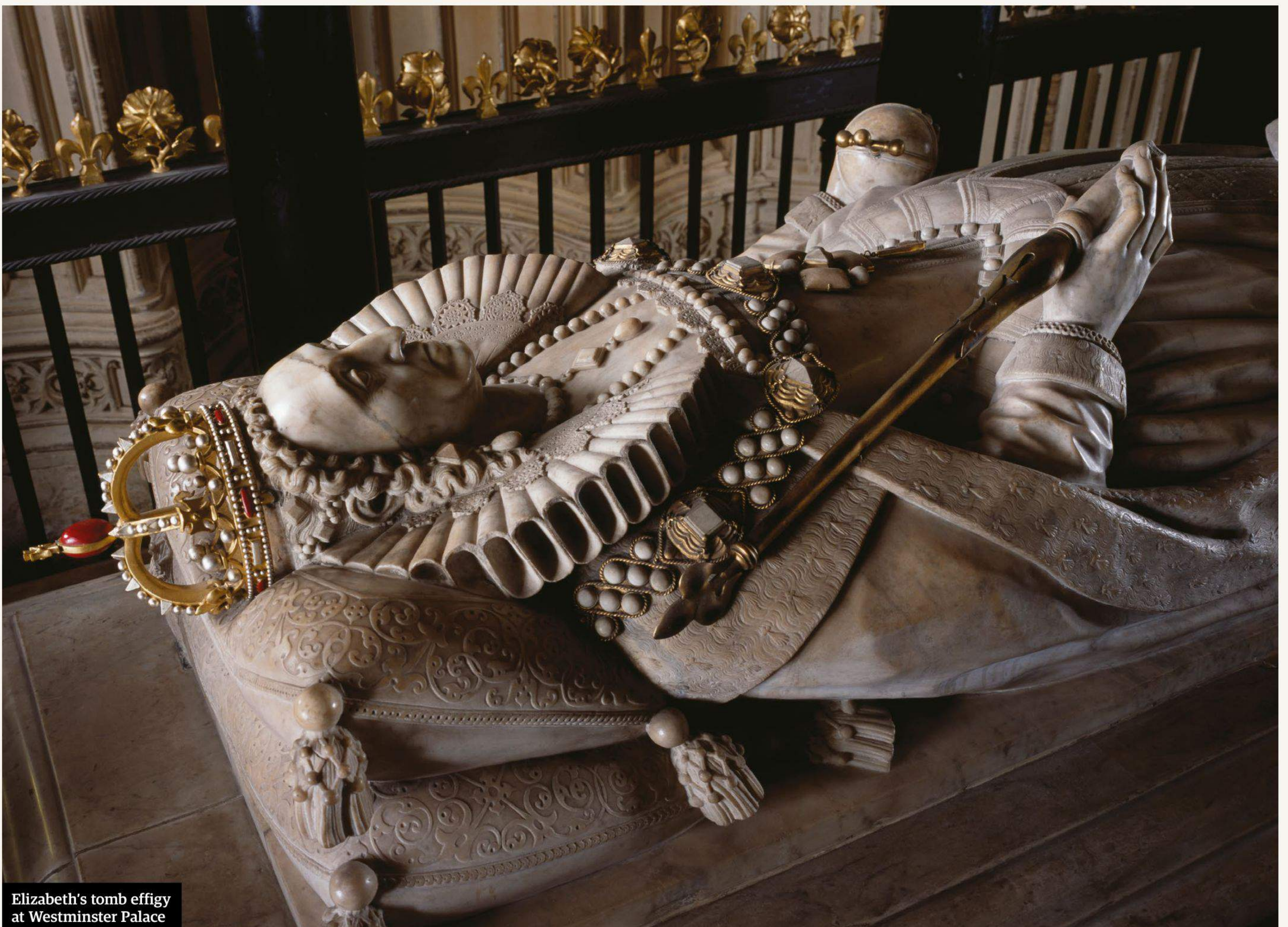
The accession of King James ushered in a new royal dynasty for the English monarchy, the Stuarts. The Stuarts had ruled Scotland since 1371, over a century before the Tudor dynasty was

founded in England by King Henry VII in 1485. The crowns of Scotland and England became personally unified under James, which eventually paved the way for the Acts of Union in 1707 and the creation of Great Britain. The Stuarts would rule over England for over a century, until the death of a childless Queen Anne in 1714.

Originally buried in the vault of her grandfather at Westminster Abbey, in 1606 Elizabeth's body was moved and she now lies on top of her half-sister, Queen Mary I. The death of Elizabeth closed a glorious, if at times turbulent, chapter in England's history. Although her popularity had waned in her final years, the queen remained devoted to her country - and remains today as one of Britain's best-loved monarchs.



Robert Cecil was determined to solve the succession crisis



Elizabeth's tomb effigy at Westminster Palace



A 19th-century Romantic painting depicting Mary as she is led to her death

Legacy of a fallen queen

Mary's controversial life and reign are still debated to this day, four centuries after she lost her head

Words by Jessica Leggett



he bloody execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, was without a doubt one of the most controversial events in British history.

Her turbulent reign, loss of power and subsequent downfall have cemented her place as a

tragic historical figure, whose life continues to draw our attention to this very day, over four centuries after her death. So what can we make of Mary's complicated legacy?

With Scotland caught in a political and religious schism, it was only a matter of time before Mary, with few allies left and enemies all around her, became engulfed in it too. Her reign was full of political disasters, poor marital decisions, and accusations of adultery, scheming and murder, all of which served to severely tarnish her reputation in the eyes of her contemporaries.

The queen was never going to be able to please everybody, partly due to decisions made for her as an infant. Having been raised in France, the Scottish people saw her as a Frenchwoman, and despite being their queen, there were many who felt she did not belong there. As for the French,

Catholic martyr, transforming her reputation from incompetent queen to sympathetic victim. Celebrated by Catholics across the continent for her piety, Mary's legacy had been permanently divided by the reactions to her shocking execution.

It is unsurprising that Mary's legacy was – and continues to be – fought over considering that she did not have the time to cultivate hers as Elizabeth had done, as the Virgin Queen. After all, there are very few surviving portraits of Mary from her lifetime in comparison to the abundance available from Elizabeth's reign. However, this does not mean that we have gone without Mary's image at all. Instead, Mary's tragic death caused a surge in new imagery from her contemporaries and beyond, designed to preserve her memory and signal her martyrdom, therefore impacting the legacy that survives today.

One of the most recognisable and iconic images of Mary is full of Catholic symbolism. Emphasising the queen's devout faith, she is depicted wearing the same outfit she wore to her death, as she holds a crucifix and a prayer book with a rosary around her waist. A powerful portrait of the monarch's piety, it presents the argument that she did not die for treason, but for her religion.

The fascination with Mary's faith continued into the 19th century, when the Victorians, coupled

“With her tumultuous and tragic life, Mary became the perfect tragic figure for artists to romanticise”

they saw Mary as not only the ruler of Scotland, but as the rightful queen of England – with no place in France after the death of her husband, King Francis II.

She was also caught between the Catholics and Protestants in her own kingdom. The former firmly believed that their queen was pious but frustrated by her refusal to fight the Scottish Reformation, while the latter attacked her for being a heretic, even though she had agreed to maintain the state of religion in Scotland despite her own beliefs.

Clearly, Mary's life was full of contradictions that would continue to affect her legacy long after her death. Her execution, at the hands of her cousin and fellow queen regnant Elizabeth I, sent shockwaves throughout Europe and proved to be a major turning point in the creation of her legacy.

To her detractors, Mary had got exactly what she deserved for being a reckless and emotionally weak queen. She had put her faith in those who were not to be trusted and allowed romantic love to interfere with her ability to rule. Above all else, her decision to marry Bothwell, the main suspect in Darnley's murder, so quickly turned the queen into a notoriously wanton woman – regardless of the fact that he had allegedly abducted and raped Mary, forcing her into marriage afterwards.

However, Mary's grace and dignity in the face of a brutal death helped turn her into a

with Romantic movement, took great interest in her legacy. With her tumultuous and tragic life, Mary became the perfect tragic figure for artists to romanticise in plays, novels and historical art. For example, there are various paintings from this period that focus on different aspects of her rule, from an exasperated Mary at loggerheads with Knox to the queen being led to her execution. A testament to Mary's popularity during this era, the Royal Academy displayed a remarkable 56 new scenes from her life just between the years 1820 and 1892.

A common theme among all the different portrayals of Mary, regardless of the medium, is the emphasis placed on her femininity and victimisation. She was turned into a tragic heroine for the ages and a feminine martyr, a queen whose vulnerability reflected the role of women in Victorian society. For the Victorians, the idea that Mary was a woman ruled by her heart was far more appealing than the idea that she was a woman ruled by her head.

Even Queen Victoria viewed Mary as a victim of the men around her. In a diary entry dated 12 July 1839, she recalled an exchange with her influential prime minister, Lord Melbourne, regarding Mary's execution. Melbourne had argued that Mary was a “bad woman” and also “a silly, idle, coquettish French girl”. Victoria did not offer a defence for the



A 17th-century copy of a painting memorialising Mary as a Catholic martyr



Katharine Hepburn as Mary in *Mary of Scotland*, 1936

targeted queen, but simply reflected in her diary entry, "I pitied her."

The interest in Mary has continued to grow to the point where she has become a mainstay in historical popular culture. Aside from literature and art, there are numerous films and television series based on the monarch's life, such as the 1936 film *Mary of Scotland* starring Katharine Hepburn, the 1971 biopic *Mary, Queen of Scots* starring Vanessa Redgrave, the 2013 television series *Reign* starring Adelaide Kane as the Scottish ruler, and the 2018 cinematic release of *Mary Queen of Scots* starring Saoirse Ronan as Mary.

Just like all other portrayals of Mary's life, all of these adaptations pick and choose how they want to present her to the audience. From a naïve, young queen who is a victim of the machinations of those around her to one who is ambitious and in control of her own decisions, there are certainly differing cultural depictions of Mary across different productions. Regardless of which one you choose to believe, there is no denying that these productions

have helped to shape what we remember of the queen in today's popular consciousness, and how her legacy is perceived.

Mary's legacy has changed in the four centuries since her death but there is one fact that will always remain - that her son, King James VI, succeeded Elizabeth on the throne of England to become King James VI & I. Arguably Mary's most significant accomplishment, she had triumphed where Elizabeth had failed, producing an heir to ensure the continuation of her dynasty.

Mary's fight to be named as Elizabeth's heir was one of the biggest priorities of her reign in spite of her cousin's refusal to do so. Their rivalry eventually came to a head after the discovery of the Babington Plot, a conspiracy to assassinate Elizabeth and replace her with Mary on the English throne. Mary was implicated in the scheme, tried for treason and executed, despite her protestations of innocence.

Whether Mary really did agree to the assassination of Elizabeth has been debated ever

"Mary's fight to be named as Elizabeth's heir was one of the biggest priorities of her reign in spite of her cousin's refusal"



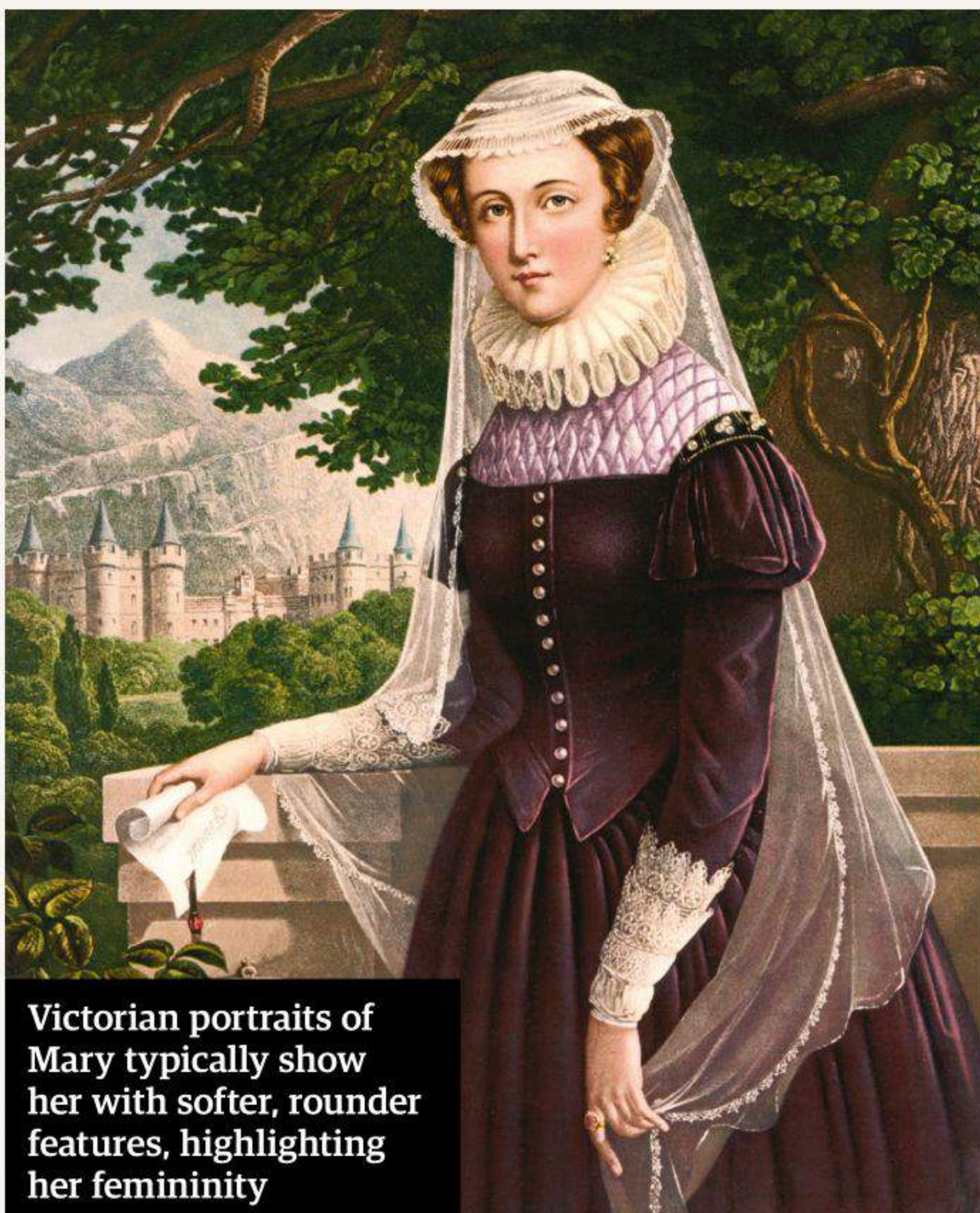
Queen Elizabeth II is descended from Mary



Saoirse Ronan stars as Mary in the 2018 film *Mary Queen of Scots*



This portrait depicts Mary side by side with her son, King James VI, although she was separated from him permanently when he was just an infant



Victorian portraits of Mary typically show her with softer, rounder features, highlighting her femininity

since her death, but there is no denying that their rivalry is synonymous with her legacy. While a number of studies, films, novels and so forth have concentrated on the queen, it is always guaranteed that her relationship with Elizabeth will feature at some point as a focus of Mary's ambition, victimisation or downfall - her legacy forever entwined with her cousin's.

After 44 years as queen of England and decades of resistance, Elizabeth was finally forced to name King James as her heir to the throne in her dying hours. Unlike his mother, James had been raised as a Protestant, which undeniably made him a better candidate than Mary for the English crown as a

Catholic queen would not have been welcomed easily, particularly after the bloody reign of Queen Mary I in the 1550s.

A smooth transition of power occurred, no doubt in part due to the king's secret correspondence with Elizabeth's secretary of state, Robert Cecil, who had long understood the need to secure the English succession, despite his queen's denial. With James' ascension to the throne, Scotland and England were joined in personal union for the first time, although they remained as individual sovereign states.

For over a century, Mary's dynasty would rule over Scotland and England with the last Stuart monarch, Queen Anne, presiding over the Acts of Union, which transformed the two countries into a single sovereign state, Great Britain, in 1707. It is quite possible that had both Mary and Elizabeth remained childless, then the successions of both the Scottish and English thrones would have been thrown into complete chaos.

Mary's dynastic legacy has even continued up to this very day as her granddaughter and King James' daughter, Elizabeth Stuart, queen of Bohemia, is an ancestor of Queen Elizabeth II, the current British monarch. Although Mary never got her hands on the English crown, her right to it was finally realised through her descendants.

If there is one thing that is for certain, it is that the enduring legacy of Mary, Queen of Scots, shows no sign of slowing down any time soon, with her memory constantly invoked in the historical consciousness. As she awaited her execution, Mary embroidered the prophetic phrase 'In my end is my beginning' - and never have truer words been sewn or spoken.

The meeting that never happened

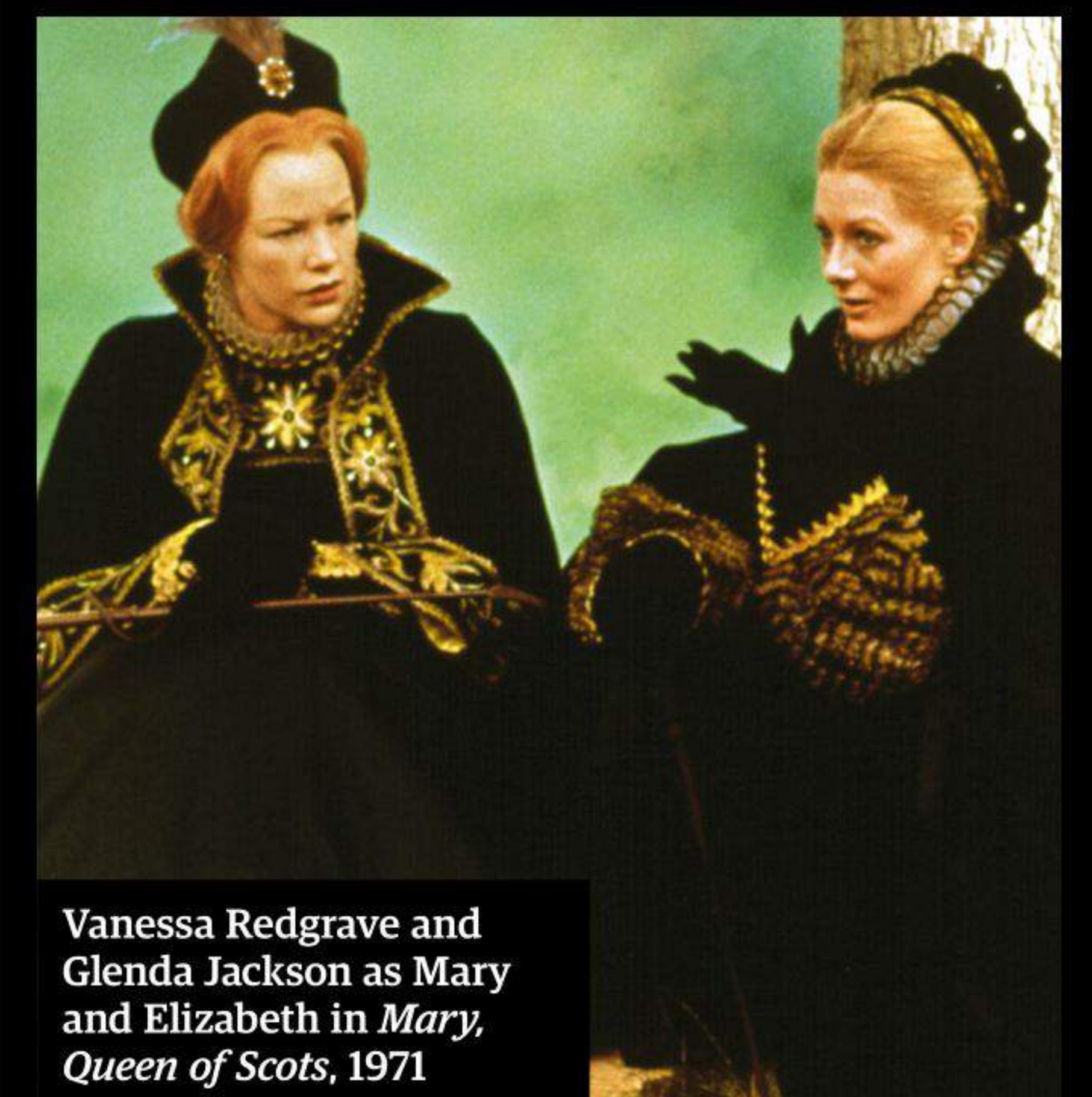
How our fascination has impacted popular memory

Watch a film or television series on Mary, Queen of Scots, and you are more than likely to witness the queen face off against her rival and cousin, Elizabeth I, in a fiery conversation before her execution. Full of drama and tension, the moment is included in some of the most critically acclaimed productions, such as the 2007 film *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* or the 1971 biopic *Mary, Queen of Scots*.

Yet despite modern media constantly touting this intense meeting between the two queens, they never actually got to meet in real life. So why is it constantly included? This topic and the issue of historical accuracy have been brought to the forefront in recent months, thanks to the release of a trailer for the 2018 film *Mary, Queen of Scots*, which again depicts this scene.

On one side, there is the argument that by including a fictional scene such as the meeting misleads viewers about the real nature of Mary and Elizabeth's relationship. On the other hand, it is argued that the moment adds excitement for the audiences who want to see the suspense between the two women played out in a nail-biting stand-off.

Of course, whatever your opinion is on the question of historical accuracy is ultimately up to you. However, there is no denying that the repeated use of this confrontational scene has become assimilated into Mary's legacy for many people, further diluting the truth that we know.



Vanessa Redgrave and Glenda Jackson as Mary and Elizabeth in *Mary, Queen of Scots*, 1971

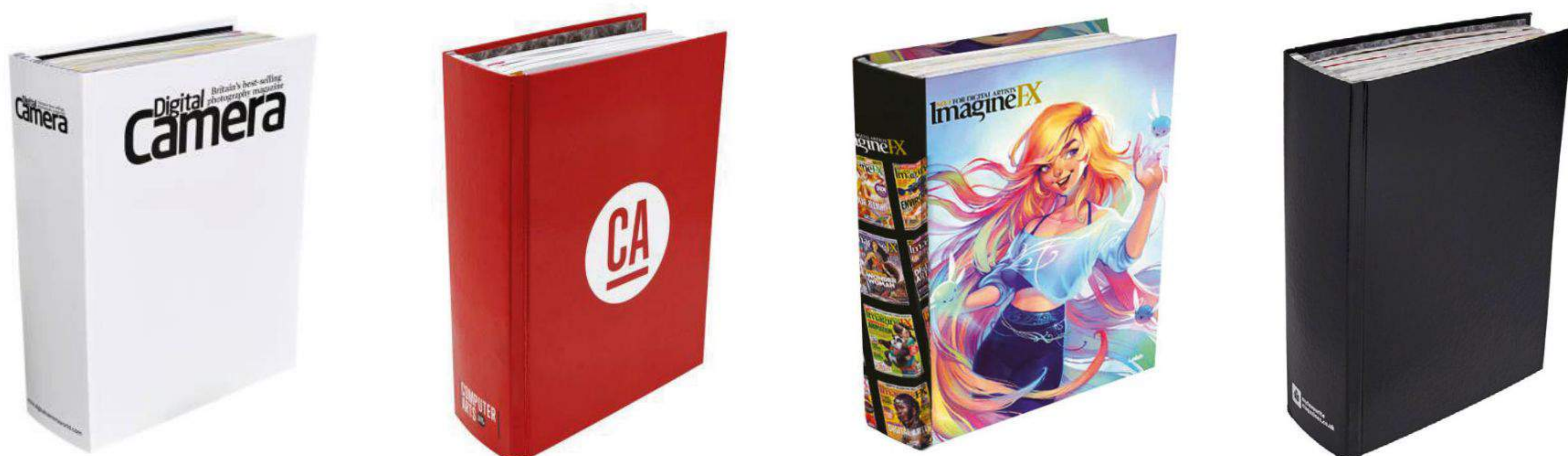
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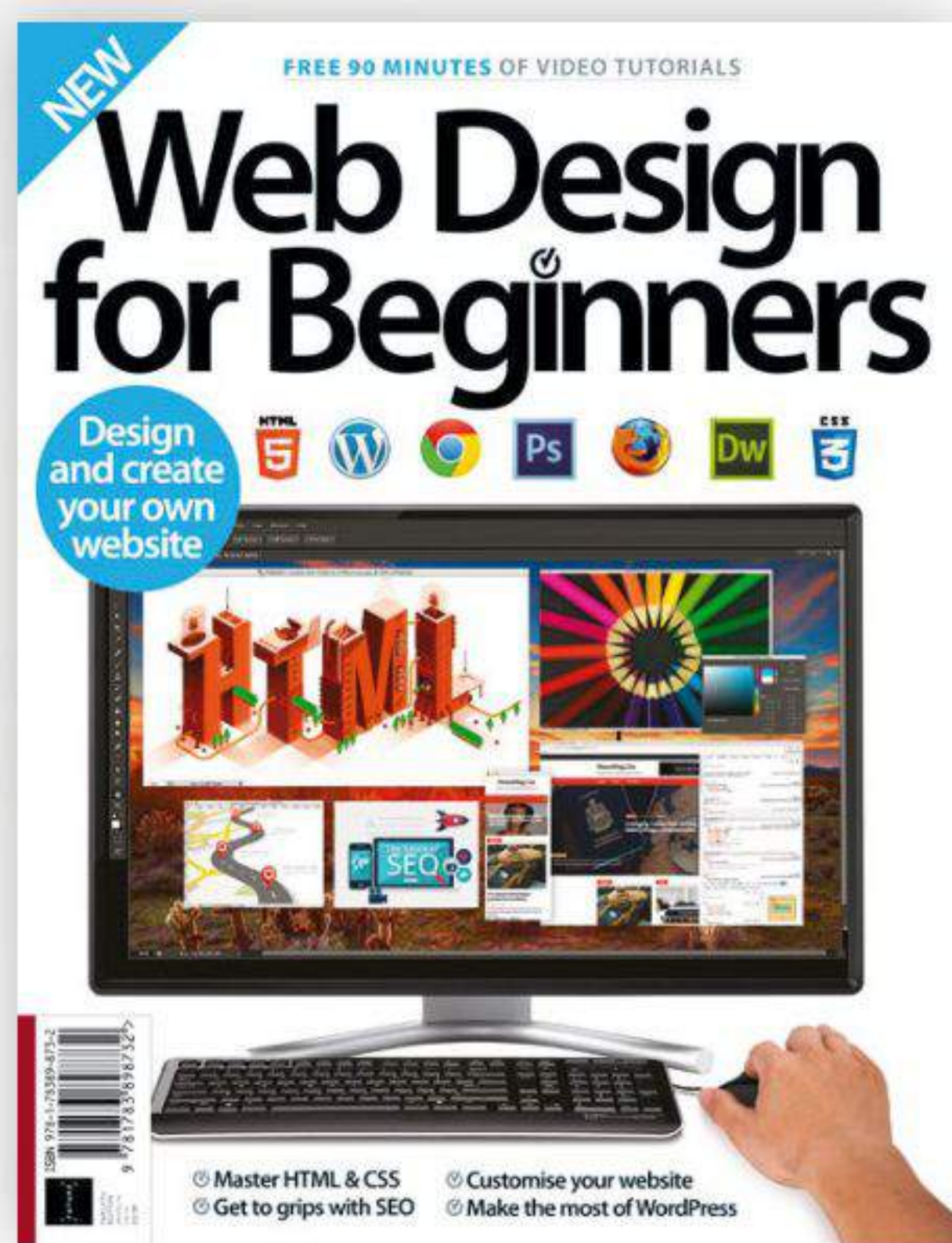


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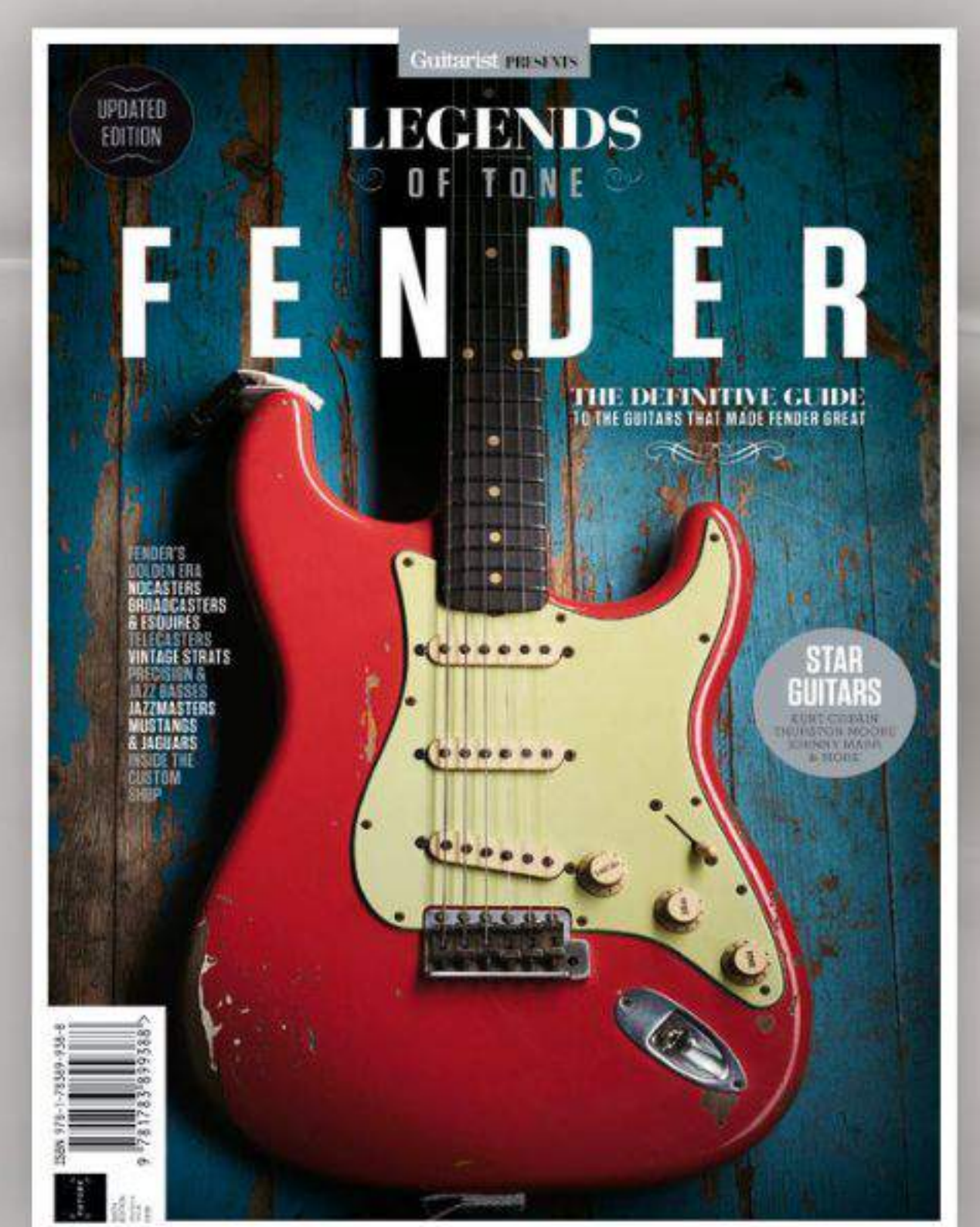
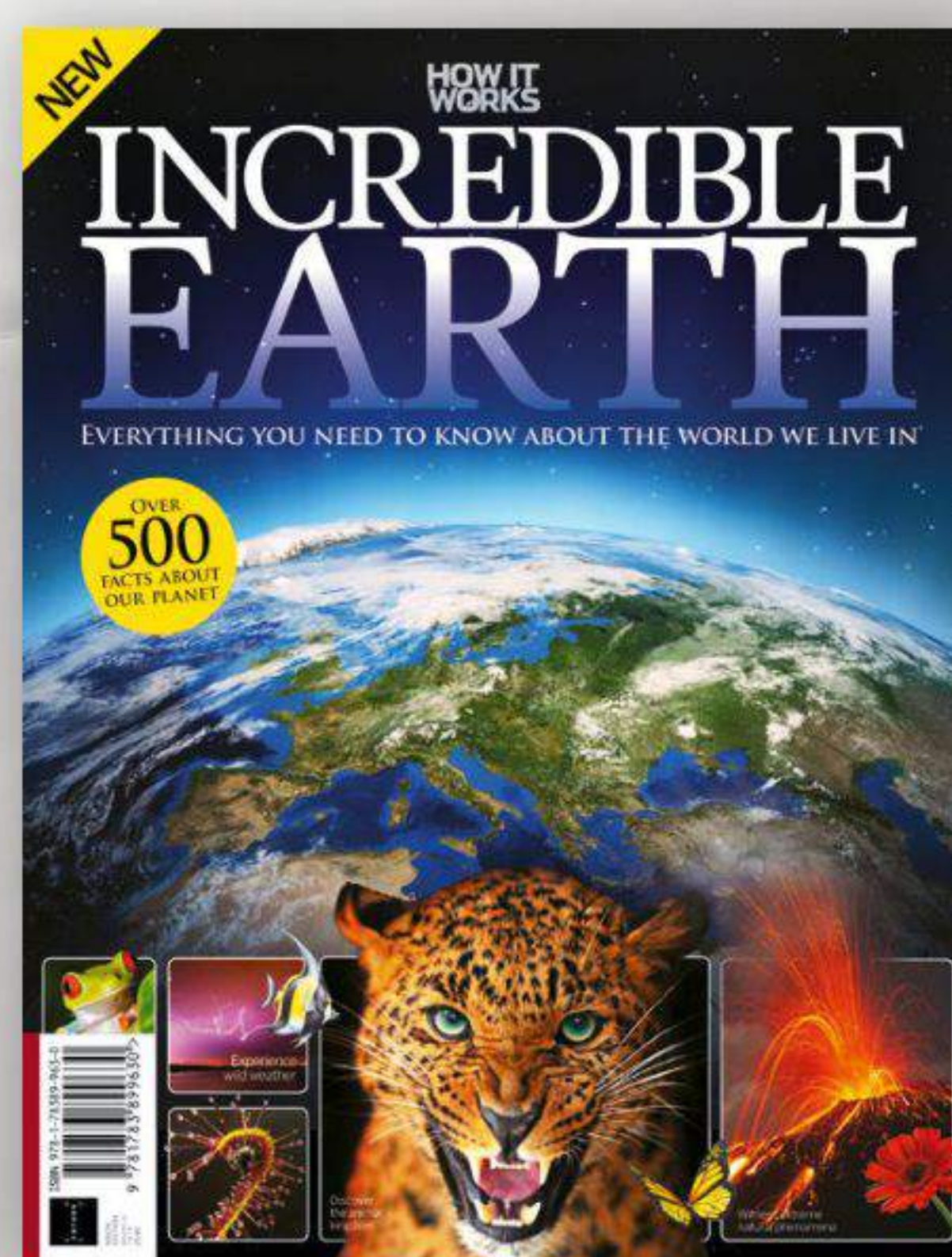
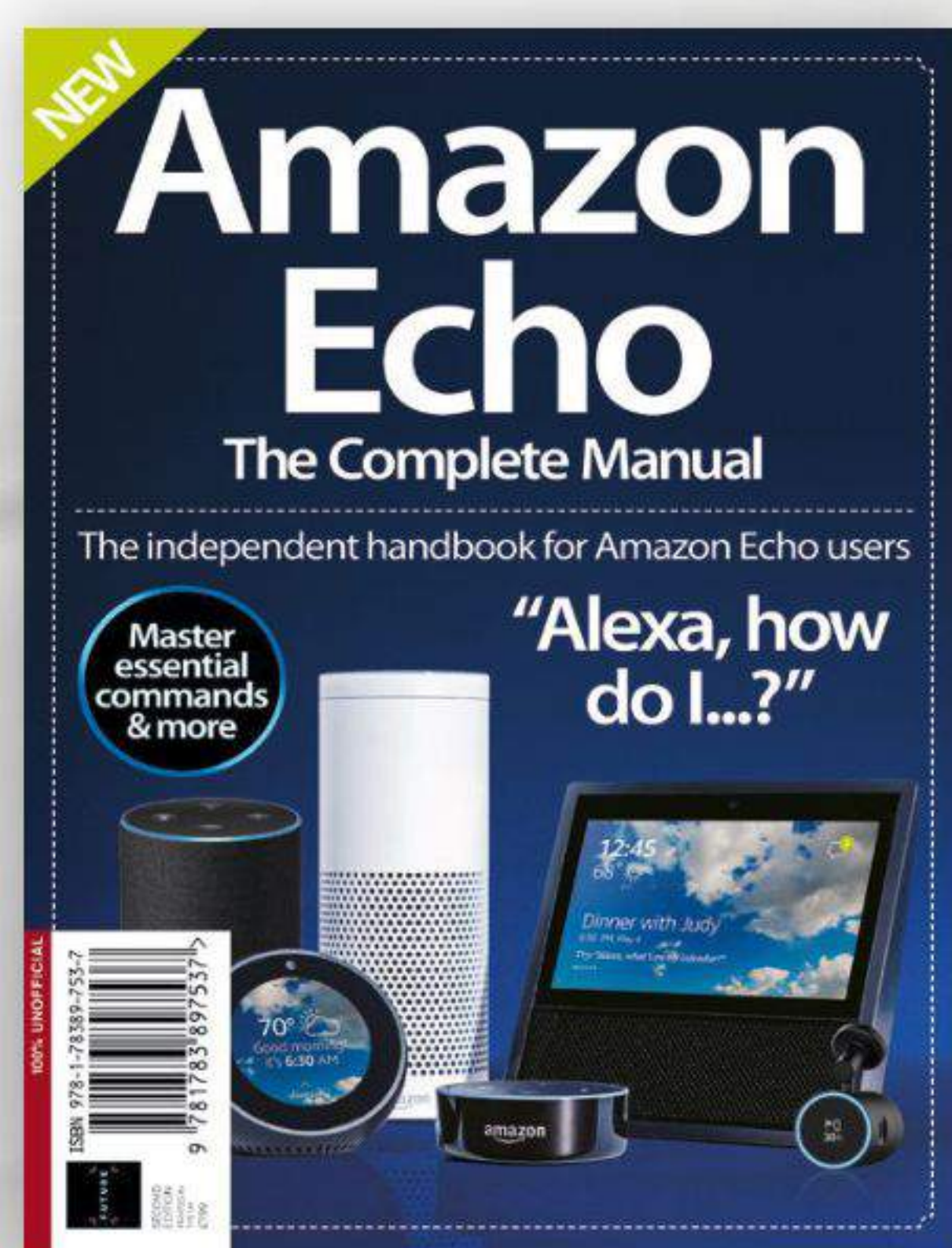
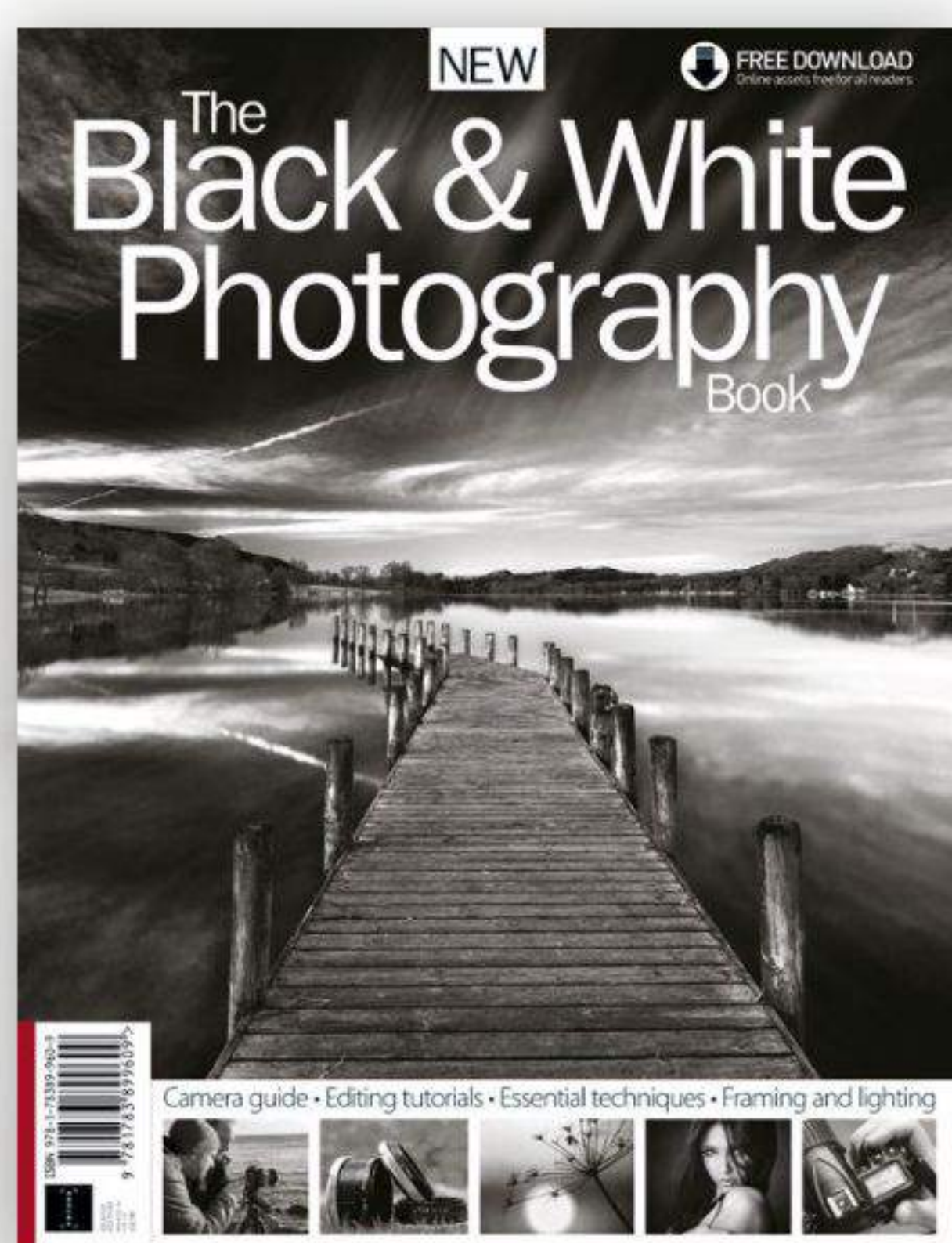


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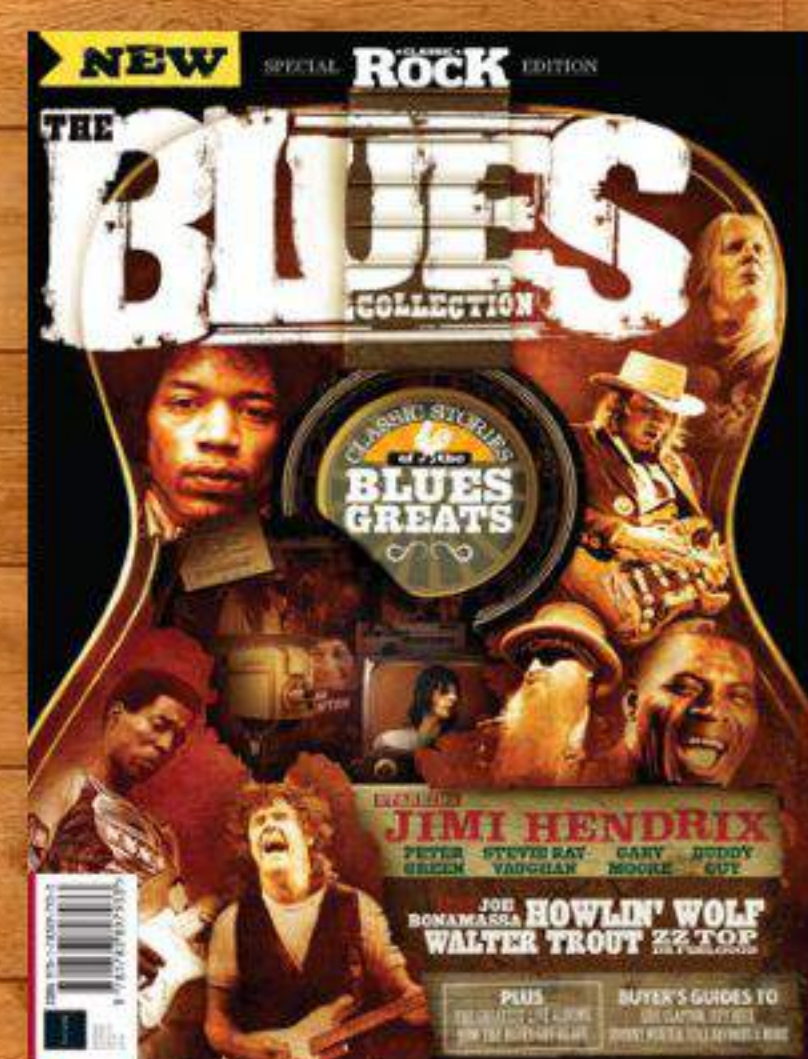
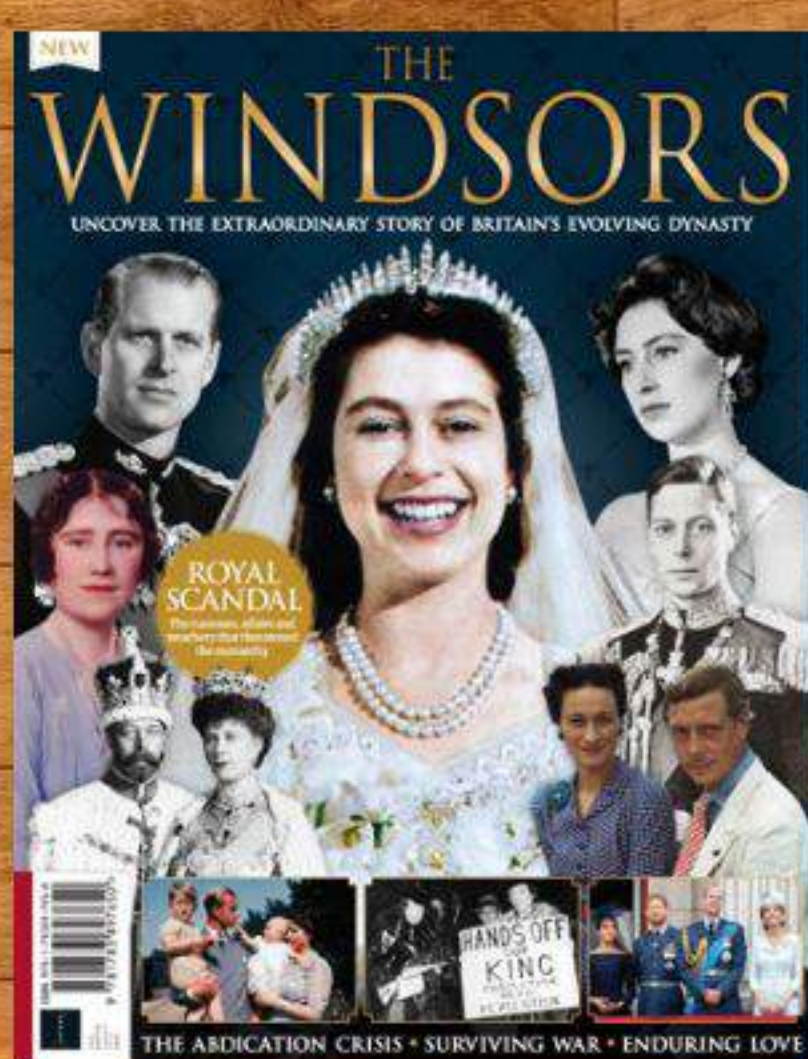
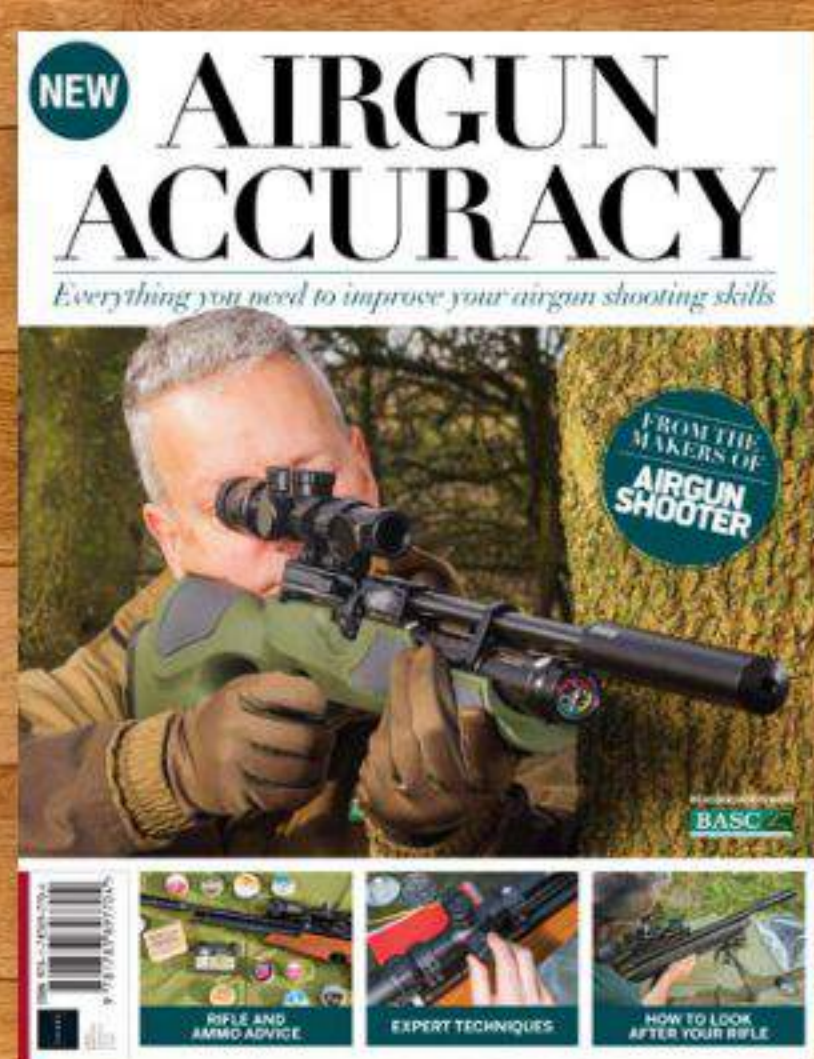
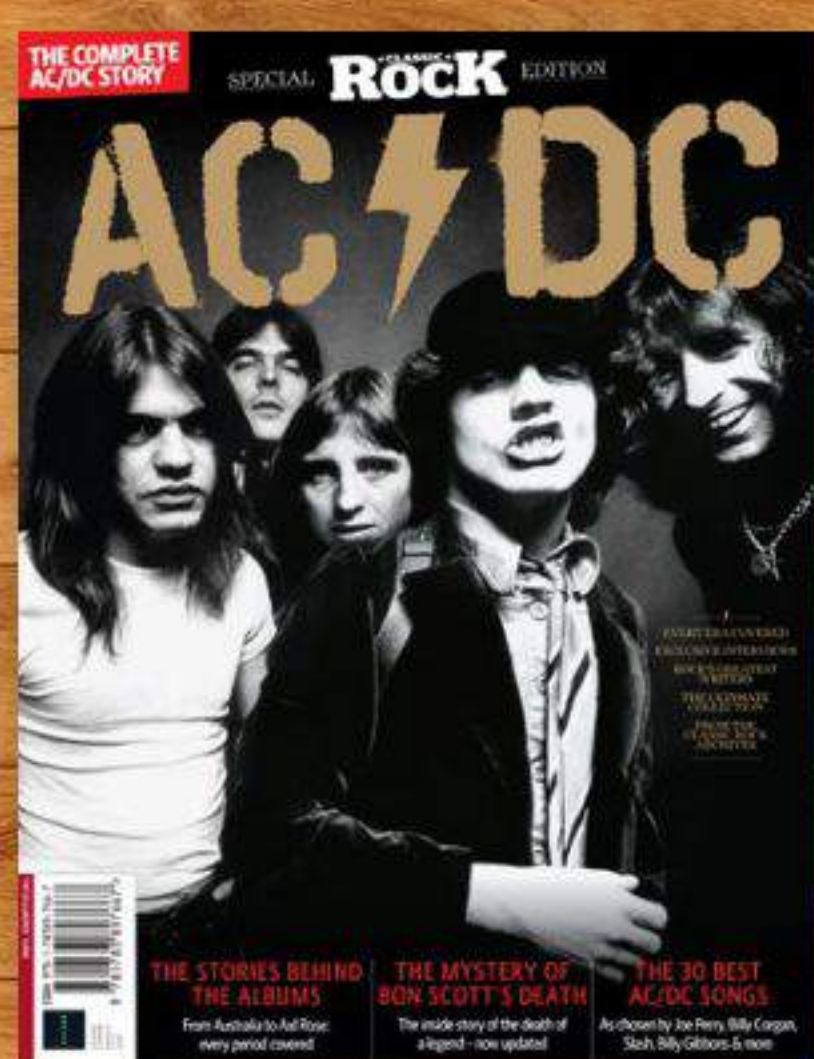
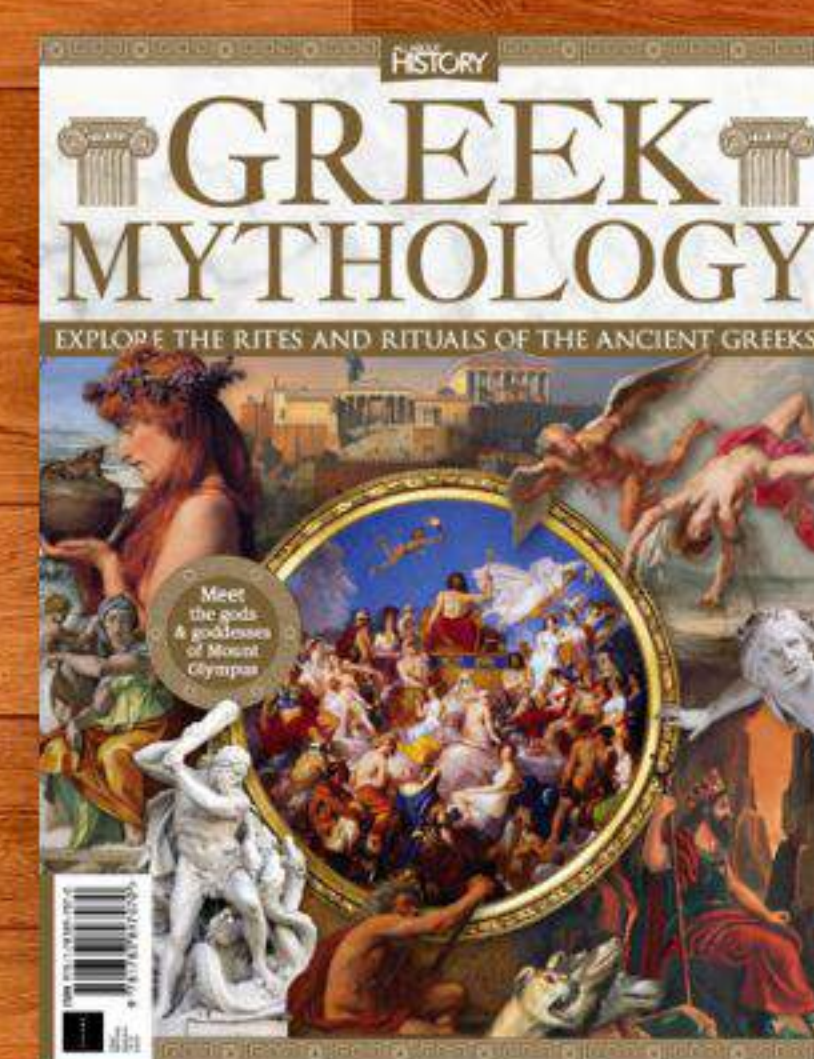
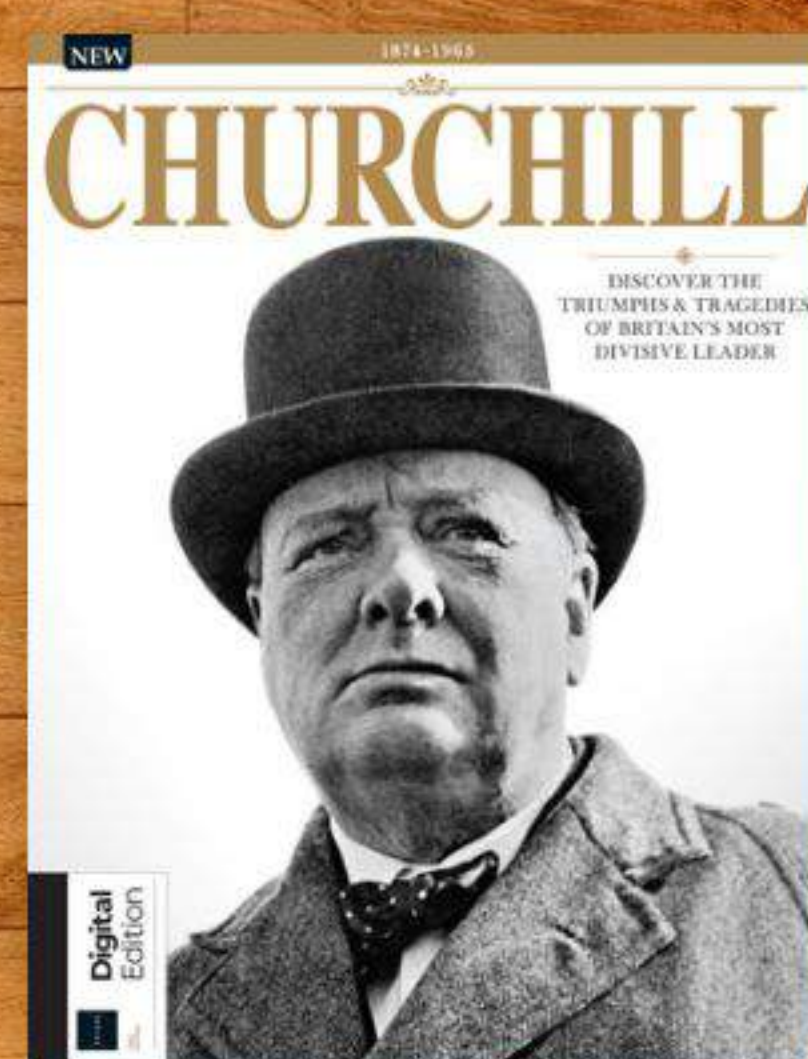
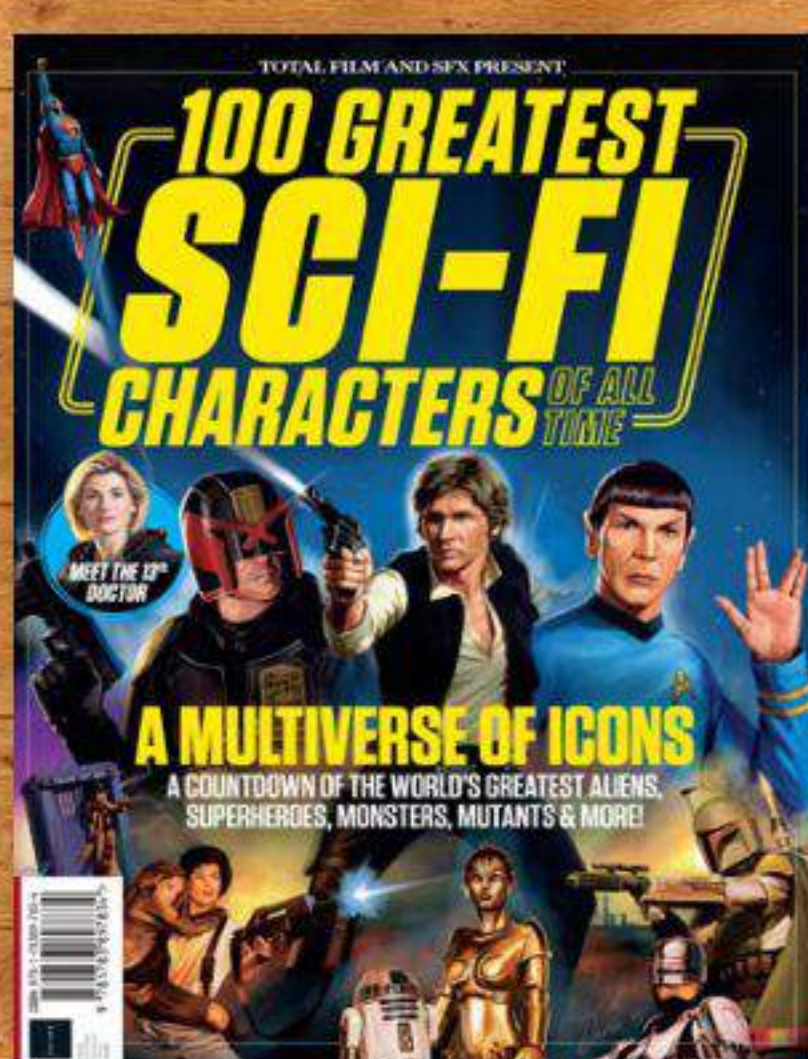
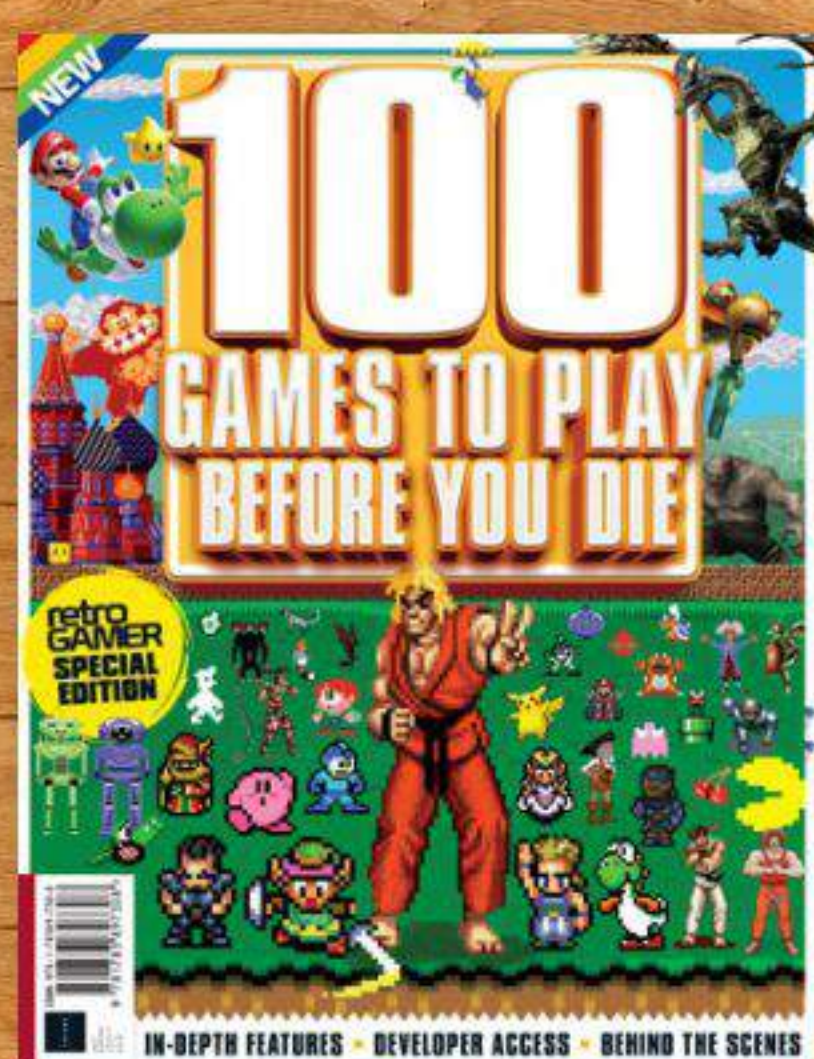
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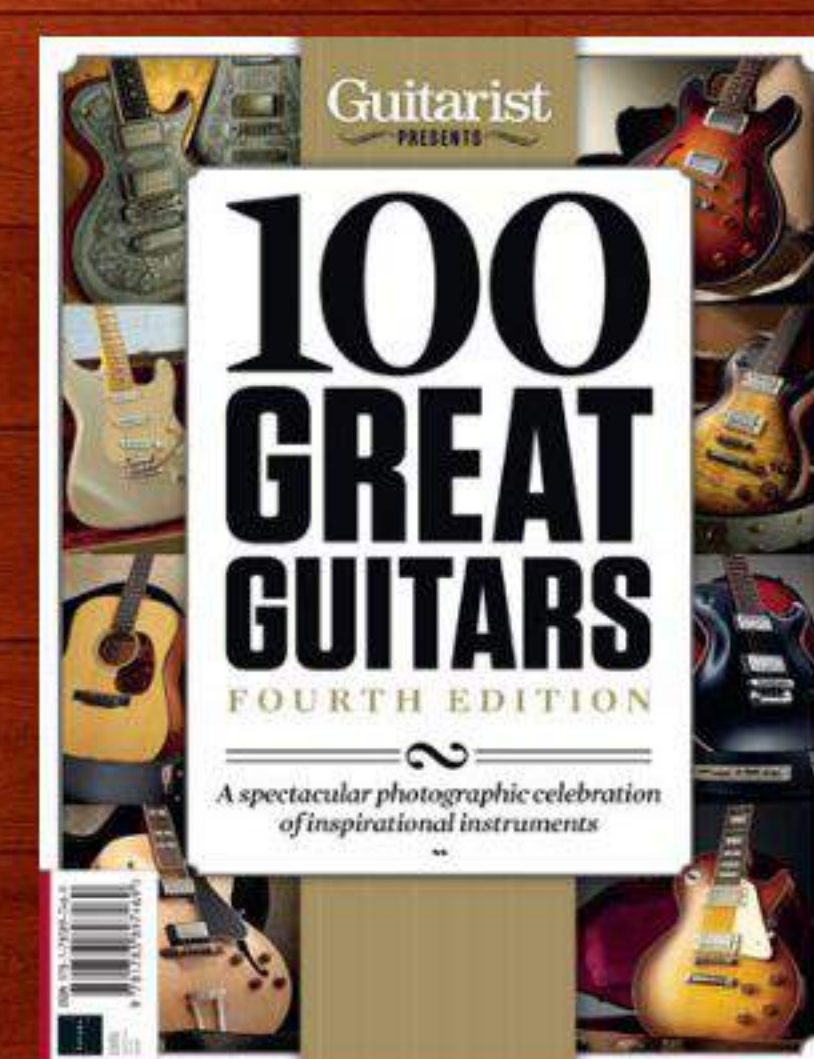
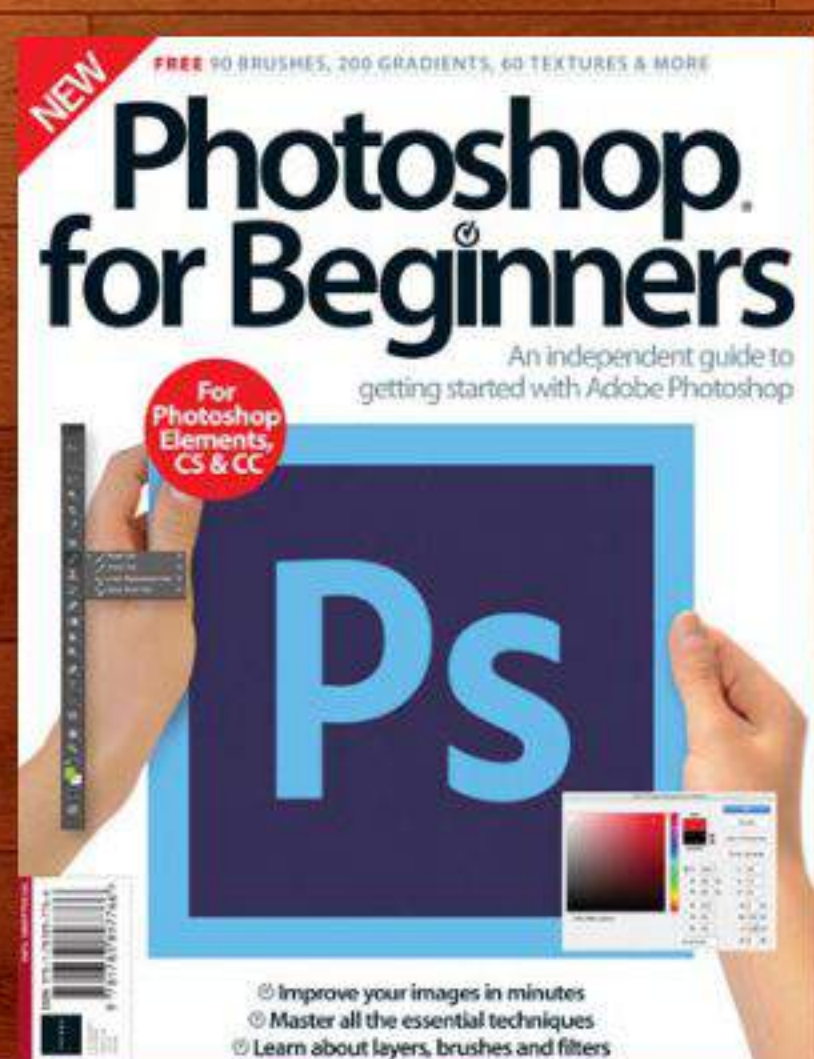
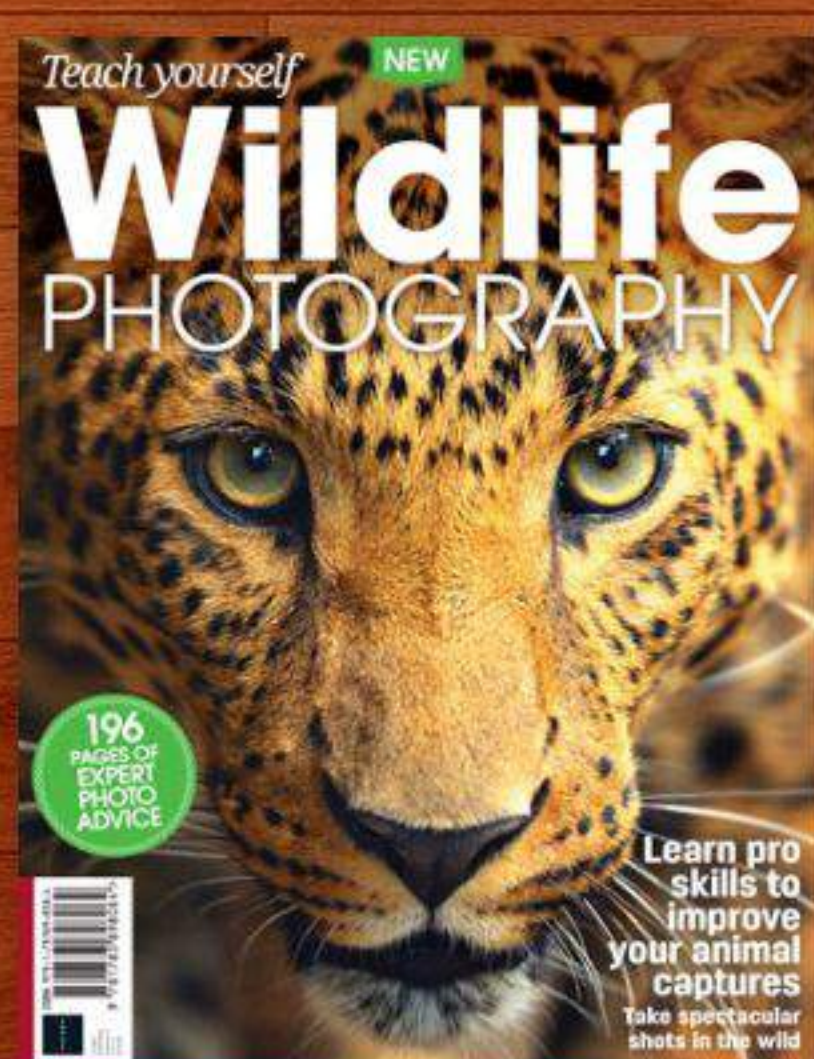
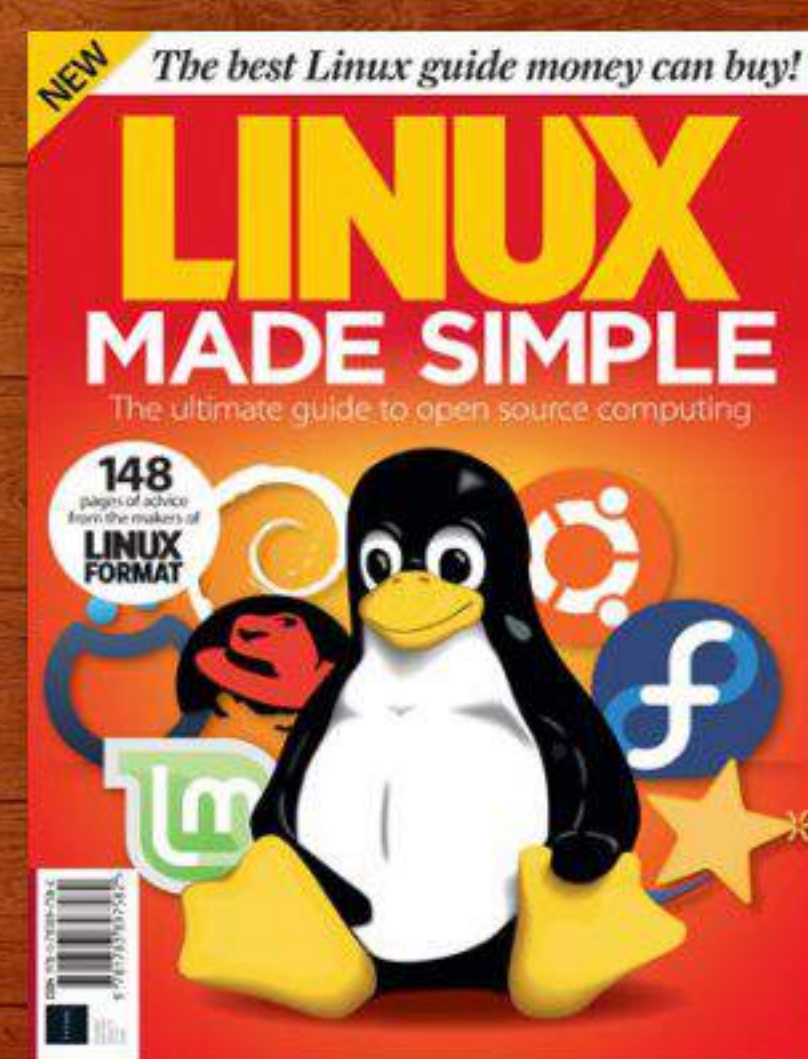


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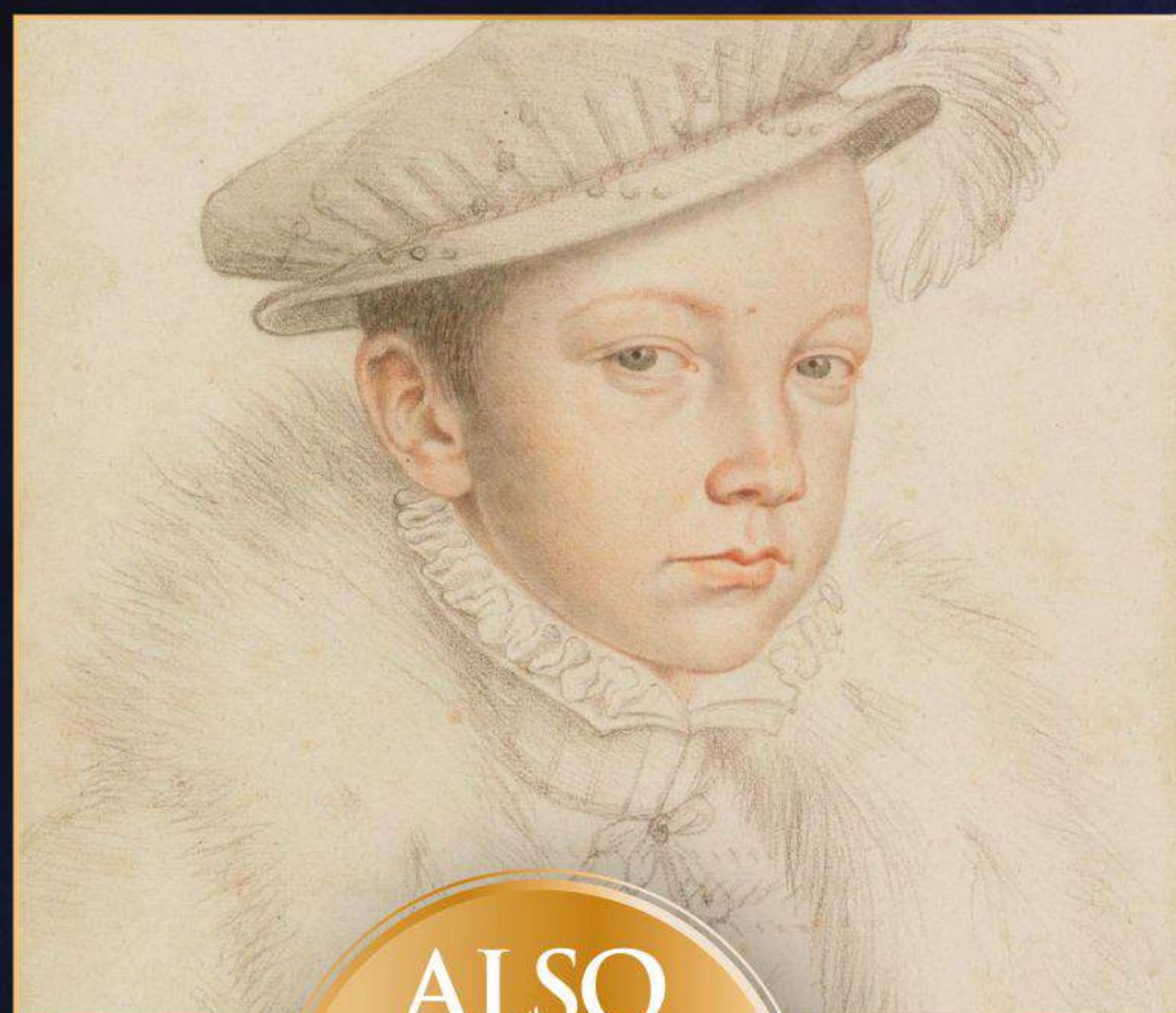


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